

Oakland growth steady, sustainable

By PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

Newcomers to Oakland are heading for the hills, according to a population study by the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments showing steady growth in the county over the last two years. While Oakland's population increased by 2.6 percent between April 1990, and July 1992, the biggest growth occurred in Auburn Hills (6.9 percent), Rochester Hills (4.1 percent) and Farmington Hills (2.4 percent). Troy and West Bloomfield also fared well in the population sweepstakes with increases of 3.2 and 3.6 percent, respectively. Detroit and Wayne County lost residents during those two years, the SEMCOG study shows. Detroit's population dipped by 1.4 percent to 1,013,974, while Wayne County's dropped by four-tenths of a percent, to 2,102,413.

The latest population figures are important because of what they say about southeast Michigan in general and Oakland specifically, said Jeffrey A. Kaczmarek, the county's manager of economic development.

"They show the growth spurt, from 1950s through the 1980s, is slowing to a more manageable and sustainable rate," Kaczmarek. In the decades after World War II, Detroit's suburbs experienced a growth explosion that imposed hardships on the infrastructure.

"But with a steady growth rate (as indicated by SEMCOG) our roads, sewers and schools should be able to keep up," he said. "With similar economic development, we should be able to keep pace with jobs."

Population growth and economic development are related, Kaczmarek emphasized. "More

people means more houses, more household goods and more retail purchases."

Oakland's growth is not necessarily at the expense of Wayne County or Detroit, said Kaczmarek. "Some of the people who left Detroit may have moved to Oakland," he said. "But I think the bulk of our population increase came as a result of companies moving people into the area."

Several companies have consolidated here, or they've opened new operations here, he said. So much of Oakland's growth is a result of workers from around the country, even the world, moving into the area.

Those new people are enriching Oakland County in other ways besides economically, Kaczmarek said. "We're becoming more diverse. With people moving in from around the country, Oakland

is becoming a more cosmopolitan community with a variety of ethnic and economic backgrounds."

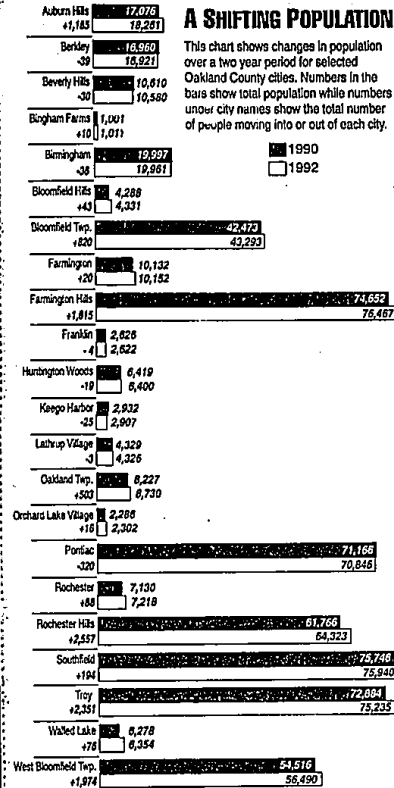
SEMCOG's study also reflects a maturing population, Kaczmarek said, with fewer members per household. "As families mature, the youngsters go away to college or go out on their own. But that's a trend nationwide as well."

Lab developing

Oakland Community College will unveil its newly remodeled photo lab at the Farmington Hills campus 7 p.m. Friday, Sept. 10.

The lab will be open for touring by the public following a ribbon cutting ceremony.

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