

County population shifts to northern, western townships

BY TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

After decades of stagnation and outflow of people, southeastern Michigan's population has risen 127,000 since 1990, particularly in the northern and western suburbs.

In Oakland County, the growth area has shifted from Farmington Hills and Troy to the two northern and two western tiers of townships: Oakland, Orion, Independence, Springfield, White Lake, Commerce and Novi. Numerically, Oakland is the biggest gainer, with 90,600 of the 127,000 new people.

Factors outlined in the SEMCOG report will put a "positive strain" on the county's infrastructure, acknowledges Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson.

"Certainly our roads will feel the strain" of continued and projected growth, said the executive. "But the strain should be manageable. On the whole, the SEMCOG report is very positive for Oakland County."

Patterson hadn't read the report, but he was briefed on its contents by Kenneth Rogers who was director of economic and community development prior to becoming deputy county executive.

Oakland County has been a growth area for some time, said Patterson, who has talked about the area's healthy economic climate at numerous meetings before chambers of commerce and service clubs.

"So, it's not surprising that the growth is expected to continue," he said.

Even so, the SEMCOG report projects Oakland County in a growth mode, Patterson said. And while growth creates problems, he said, "They're the kind of problems many communities would love to have. A lot of communities would like to have a traffic jam once in awhile."

Most local communities have updated master plans, Patterson said, "so I'm confident we're managing that growth relatively well. Oakland remains a vibrant community with good schools, good parks and a high quality of life," he said.

As usual, the population

growth is uneven in southeastern Michigan. Detroit continues to be the big loser, falling below one million, and has been joined by Redford Township, Livonia, Garden City, Wayne, Dearborn Heights and the downriver suburbs.

Percentage-wise, Livingston County is the growth hot spot of the seven-county region, gaining 19.5 percent in population since the 1990 census.

The figures were published by SEMCOG, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, a planning agency for the seven-county region of Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Livingston, Washtenaw, St. Clair and Monroe. They are dated July 1, 1996, and reflect a year's delay in compiling building statistics from hundreds of cities and townships.

Although many units, such as Livonia, lost population, they continued to gain housing units as family size continued to shrink. The region's population grew 2.7 percent and household growth rose 6.7 percent during the 1990s.

Here are samples of growth in Oakland County:

■ Beverly Hills - down 0.8 percent in population to 10,629; up 0.4 percent in housing units to 4,092.

■ Bingham Farms - up 2.5 percent in population to 1,026; up 3.1 percent in housing units to 423.

■ Franklin village - up 2 percent in population to 2,679; up 3.2 percent in housing units to 1,008.

■ Birmingham - up 1.3 percent in population to 20,257; up 3.4 percent in housing units to 9,434.

■ Bloomfield Hills - up 3.4 percent in population to 4,434; up 4.2 percent in housing units to 1,581.

■ Bloomfield Township - up 3.8 percent in population to 44,100; up 4.8 percent in housing units to 16,494.

■ Clarkston - up 1.3 percent in population to 1,018; up 2 percent in housing units to 440.

■ Independence Township - up 24.5 percent in population to 29,539; up 28.7 percent in housing units to 10,267.

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■ Lake Orion village - up 0.5 percent in population to 3,073; up 1.8 percent in housing units to 1,262.

■ Orion Township - up 28.2 percent in population to 28,948; up 29.5 percent in housing units to 9,496.

■ Oxford village - up 11.6 percent in population to 3,267; up 10.8 percent in housing units to 1,275.

■ Oakland Township - up 35.6 percent in population to 11,169; up 35.3 percent in housing units to 3,887. These were the highest percentage growth rates in Oakland County.

■ Rochester city - up 18.4 percent in population to 8,442; up 7.2 percent in housing units to 3,609.

■ Rochester Hills - up 10.9 percent in population to 68,501; up 9.8 percent in housing units to 24,538.

■ Troy - up 9.8 percent in population to 80,017; up 9.9 percent in housing units to 28,758. It's the second largest city in Oakland County behind Farmington Hills.

■ Lathrup Village - up 0.3 percent in population to 4,340; up 1.4 percent in housing units to 1,600.

■ Southfield city - up 0.7 percent in population to 76,248; up 2.3 percent in housing units to 32,864.

■ Farmington - down 0.2 percent in population to 10,161; up 1.2 percent in housing units to 4,746.

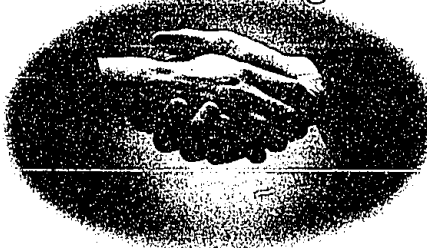
■ Farmington Hills - the largest city in Oakland County was up 7.6 percent to 80,303; housing units were up 9.1 percent to 31,874.

■ West Bloomfield Township - up 11.7 percent in population to 60,866; up 12.2 percent in housing units to 21,572.

■ Orchard Lake Village - up 2.3 percent in population to 2,339; up 3.6 percent in housing units to 721.

Meanwhile, Pontiac, the county seat and once the largest city, slipped 0.6 percent in population to 70,681.

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