



Census: Will Co. among fastest growing in state

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LOCAL POPULATION GROWTH 2000-2010			
	2000	2010	% change
Grundy County	37,535	50,063	81.82
Kendall County	54,544	114,736	110.35
Will County	502,266	677,560	34
Bolingbrook	56,321	73,366	30.26
Channahon	7,344	12,560	71.02
Crest Hill	13,329	20,837	56.33
Joliet	106,221	147,433	38.8
Lockport	15,1919	24,839	63.51
Minooka	3,971	10,924	175
Morris	11,928	13,636	14.32
New Lenox	17,771	24,394	37.27
Plainfield	13,038	39,581	203.58
Romeoville	21,153	39,680	87.6
Shorewood	7,686	15,615	103.16
Wilmington	5,134	5,724	11.49

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Joliet grew 38.8 percent and Will County grew 34.9 percent from 2000 to 2010, making them among the fastest growing areas in the state, according to 2010 Census data released Tuesday afternoon.

Joliet's growth pushed it from the seventh largest city in the state in 2000 to the fourth largest in 2010.

While a few other counties had higher percentages of growth, Will County added more people — 175,294 — than any other county in the state.

The top five cities in the state are: Chicago, 2,695,598; Aurora, 197,899; Rockford, 152,871; Joliet, 147,433; and Naperville, 141,853.

Chicago's population dropped 6.9 percent since the 2000 Census. Aurora grew by 38.4 percent, Naperville grew by 10.5 percent and Rockford grew by 1.8 percent.

Cook County remains the biggest with a population of 5,194,675, a drop of 3.4 percent since 2000. Rounding out the top five counties are: DuPage, 916,924, up 1.4 percent; Lake, 703,462, up 9.2 percent; Will, 677,560, up 34.9 percent; and Kane, 515,269, up 27.5 percent.

While Chicago lost 200,000 in population, the Chicago metropolitan area as a whole continued to grow by 280,000 people, said Matt Maloney, deputy chief of staff for policy development for the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

"What that tells us is our metropolitan area remains a very attractive place for people to move to," he said.

Will County numbers

Will County Executive Larry Walsh said at one time Will County was expected to top 700,000 in this Census. But the recession slowed growth in the latter years of the decade.

The growth Will County did experience will present infrastructure challenges for years to come, but it also will increase the county's clout in Springfield, Walsh said.

"Will County will play a major role in the redistricting of our congressional seats," he said.

Growth in the Will County region also demonstrates the need for such proposed roads as the Illiana Expressway and the Prairie Parkway, he said.

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The 2010 Census data shows Will County almost matched its growth from 1990 to 2000, when it grew 40.6 percent.

Through much of the past decade, Will County continued to be one of the fastest growing counties in Illinois and one of the fastest growing in the country. Will County also made the list of 100 most populous counties in the country for the first time. A 2008 estimated population of 681,097 pushed Will County to 87th on the list.

CMAP estimates Will County will grow to 1.2 million by the year 2040, which would make it the second most populous county in Illinois behind Cook.

But there was a dark side to the growth. Will County's rapid growth slowed with the recession and housing market collapse. Will County added more than 20,000 people a year from 2000 to 2006, but in 2007 the number started to shrink.

Now the county and its fast-growing neighbor, Kendall County, are known for having the highest foreclosure rates in Illinois.

Walsh said the foreclosures are a result of the bad economy and high unemployment.

"It's hard to pay a mortgage payment when you have half the income coming in or no income coming in," he said. "It's a very, very unfortunate thing."

As the economy picks up, Walsh said he expects the county to continue to grow as people seek a good quality of life and good schools. But it may never be at the pace it once was.

"That was extreme," he said. "... When growth takes place faster than you can provide services, that's not good either."