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**Data: Loudoun growth finally slowing**

By **Rachelle Brown**

Special to The Examiner 3/19/09

Loudoun County, which topped the list of the nation's fastest-growing counties for several years at the beginning of the decade, has slipped to 20th, according to data released Thursday by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Still, it was the fastest-growing county in the Washington area last year. Its population grew 4.6 percent to 289,995, an increase of just more than 12,500 people, between 2007 and 2008.

**Local growth**

**Area change**

District  
+0.7%

Montgomery County  
+1.0%

Prince George's County  
0.5%

Arlington County  
+3.0%

Alexandria  
+2.9%

Fairfax County  
+1.1%

Loudoun County  
+4.6%

Prince William County  
+1.4%

**Annual**

"It's been a fast-growing county for a long time," said Greg Harper, a demographer for the U.S. Census Bureau, "so it's not that surprising that it's growing so quickly."

The fastest-growing county in the U.S. was St. Bernard Parish, La., home of New Orleans, which was decimated by Hurricane Katrina in August 2005. Its population grew 12.8 percent, to 37,722 in 2008.

Most of Loudoun County's growth was from domestic migration — people moving in and out of the county. There was also growth due to natural increase, the number of births minus the number of deaths.

"[Loudoun's] just got sort of this reputation as the place to live," said Mike Spar, a research associate in the Demographics and Work Force section of the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia.

Arlington County's population increased about 3 percent, making it the third-fastest-growing county in Virginia. The city of Alexandria's numbers rose almost 3 percent, and Fairfax County's increased 1.1 percent.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

But despite the increases, Spar said the recession and the housing crisis are "slowing people down."

"The state is gaining more people currently through natural increase than before, and yet the state's population is not growing as quickly, so the culprit is in the migration figures," Spar said.

"Domestic migration has basically fallen off a cliff," he continued, explaining that the recession has reduced the numbers of people who move for a better job. In addition, the housing market is suffering, making it difficult for homeowners to sell and move elsewhere.

"At the state level, I think it's very apparent," Spar said. "And certainly, if we're correct in ascribing these factors, they will be seen everywhere."

The District of Columbia saw a 0.7 percent increase in its population, gaining about 4,000 people

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between 2007 and 2008.

Maryland had smaller increases. Montgomery County saw about a 1 percent increase, while Prince George's County's population slipped about 0.5 percent, losing about 4,500 people between 2007 and 2008.

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