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## Suburbs grab the big slice

Latest census shows state and region grew in population overall between 1990 and 2000, but most cities lost residents as surrounding towns and villages continued to attract people

The Capital Region has more people than a decade ago, but for the most part, they're still opting to live in the suburbs rather than the cities.

Despite the migration away from upstate urban areas, the state's population grew an overall 5.5 percent to 18,976,456 people, with much of that growth in New York City and its surrounding areas.

But the state's population increase won't be enough to keep New York from losing two of its 31 seats in the House of Representatives.

Still, Gov. George Pataki's office said the latest census data was mostly positive. "New York has its fastest rate of growth in 30 years," said spokesman Michael McKeon. He acknowledged, however, that upstate New York did not do as well as the rest of the state.

"We certainly need to continue to do more to spur our economic renewal," he said. "The fact is that population follows jobs, and that's why when 500,000 jobs left this state during the early 1990s, so did the people who wanted those jobs."

Local officials in Schenectady, Troy and Albany vowed to challenge the count in an effort to keep federal and state money, which is often distributed on the basis of population, from

The logo for First Media, featuring the words "First Media" in a purple, sans-serif font, enclosed in a green rectangular border.The logo for Stickley Furniture, featuring the word "Stickley" in a stylized, cursive font above the word "FURNITURE" in a bold, sans-serif font, all enclosed in a green rectangular border.The logo for Neurological Associates of Albany, P.C., featuring a stylized globe icon above the text "NEUROLOGICAL ASSOCIATES OF ALBANY, P.C." in a bold, sans-serif font, all enclosed in a green rectangular border.

leaving their cities.

"I share in the suspicion that we're not fully counted," said Troy Mayor Mark Pattison, whose city saw one of the largest drops in the state with a 9.4 percent decrease in population.

Saratoga County, however, remained one of the fastest growing counties in upstate New York, posting an 11 percent increase in population to 200,635 from 181,276 in 1990.

And Saratoga Springs became a notable exception Thursday when it was the only city in the Capital Region to see any growth over the last decade. Its population increased by 1,185 people, or 4.7 percent, for a total of 26,186.

"There were not a lot of surprises," said Todd Fabozzi, program manager at the Capital District Regional Planning Commission. Earlier projections had already predicted losses in Albany, Schenectady and Troy.

While the 53 counties of upstate New York actually posted a population gain of 1 percent, the largest cities, including Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Albany and Schenectady, all lost population.

"This is a continuation of the trend we've been seeing since the 1950s," Fabozzi said. "It's referred to as the post-war, suburban flight."

The numbers from the U.S. Census Bureau also revealed details on the racial and ethnic backgrounds of the state's residents and where they are living.

Statewide, the number of people identifying themselves as Hispanic increased by 29.5 percent to 2.9 million, the majority living in the New York City area. Whites continued to be the majority in New York at 67.9 percent, with blacks making up 15.9 percent and Hispanics comprising 15.1 percent of the population.

Like the rest of the state, the Capital Region's

minority population is continuing to become more segregated, concentrating in city neighborhoods of the same race.

"One thing that's remarkable here is the African-American population is more concentrated in the central cities of the region than it was in 1990," said John Logan, a professor of sociology at the University at Albany and the director of its Lewis Mumford Center for Comparative Urban and Regional Research.

Logan, who began delving into the census numbers on Thursday, found that while blacks are opting to live in the cities, the most dramatic population growth among Capital Region Asians and Hispanics has been in the suburbs.

"The pattern we are seeing here is very much like in the large metropolitan areas like New York City and Chicago," he said. "It's the same pattern on a smaller scale."

The shift of people in the Capital Region from the cities to the suburbs cost Schenectady 3,745 people, a 5.7 percent drop from 65,566 to 61,821.

"While I'm not happy there was a decrease, it was not as much as I thought it would be," said Mayor Albert R. Jurchynski. "It's good news, bad news."

Despite the population drop in the cities, overall the Capital Region posted a population gain of 2.1 percent. Virtually all the growth was in suburban areas such as Halfmoon, Malta, East Greenbush, Brunswick, Niskayuna and Bethlehem.

David Meager, Malta town supervisor, said he expected Saratoga County and its communities along the Northway to see double-digit growth, especially after a decade of aggressive development that has brought new job opportunities to the area.

"You combine low taxes, low crime and

employment opportunities and it makes a winning combination," he said.

Yet while local officials applauded the growth in Saratoga County, they have also been working on initiatives to curb development. Several communities, including Halfmoon, Malta, Wilton and Saratoga Springs, are looking at ways to preserve woods and fields.


"All of this growth has its benefits, but unless it's monitored through good planning and good zoning, there can be a downside," Meager said.

One downside is likely to be more congestion on the Northway, especially during the morning commute into Albany. The Capital District Transportation Committee is projecting traffic will continue to increase as the population grows.

*Staff writer Cathy Woodruff and State Editor Jay Jochnowitz contributed to this report.*

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