



File Photo

Boaters cruise along a section of Lake Keowee earlier this summer. Oconee and Greenville counties top the list in housing growth, according to a recent report issued by the U.S. Census Bureau. Oconee County Planning Department Director Art Holbrooks attributed housing unit growth in Oconee largely to an influx of residents along Lake Keowee.

Oconee housing boom

Rate of growth tops list at 14.3 percent, report indicates

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SENECA — Oconee County's rate of growth based on housing unit estimates is unsurpassed by any of its Upstate neighbors, a recently released U.S. Census Bureau report shows.

The report indicates housing units grew at a 14.3 percent rate in Oconee from 32,383 since the 2000 Census to 37,017 units as of July 2007.

The housing information

helps federal government officials gauge the growth of an area at the county and state level.

Greenville County, which added 23,283 housing units during the same period, also increased at a clip of 14.3 percent to tie Oconee as the fastest growing counties in the Upstate.

The U.S. Census Bureau uses building permits, mobile home shipments and estimates of housing unit loss to update housing unit change since the last cen-

sus.

Spartanburg County (12.8 percent), Anderson County (12.4 percent) and Pickens County (11 percent) were the only other Upstate counties showing double-digit, housing-unit growth.

Oconee County Planning Department Director Art Holbrooks said that, without a doubt, housing construction in the county centers around Lake Keowee.

"We have so many retirees

By the numbers

This chart shows the estimated number of housing units in 2000 versus 2007. The growth rate change is measured in percentages.

COUNTY	2000	2007	CHANGE
Greenville	162,803	186,086	14.3
Oconee	32,383	37,017	14.3
Spartanburg	106,986	120,681	12.8
Anderson	73,213	82,321	12.4
Pickens	46,000	51,073	11

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

that have been attracted here by the lake," Holbrooks said. "The main force has been around Lake Keowee."

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land management and real estate development company operated by a partnership that includes Duke Energy, has been a driving force in the spike of Lake Keowee subdivisions. Duke Energy created Lake Keowee in the early 1960s to be the cooling source for its nuclear plant.

Another big player contributing to the building boom at Lake Keowee is The Cliffs Communities. The company's lakeside communities, The Cliffs at Keowee, are master-planned luxury residential communities that cater to retirees.

Patrick Lee, executive director of the Greater Seneca Chamber of Commerce, said he's not surprised Oconee fares so well in its rate of adding housing units.

"The historical perspective, as I see it, a big proportion

of our housing starts is lake development," Lee said.

Lee said new development is going on at Lake Hartwell in Oconee as well. He said the Highpointe and PointeWest projects between Clemson and Seneca are going to be high-impact developments for Oconee.

The Highpointe and PointeWest projects, which alone would add more than 1,500 housing units to Oconee's market, are not factored into the Census Bureau's report.

Michael Dey, a spokesman for the Homebuilders Association of Greenville, said jobs are spurring growth in Greenville.

"Our attraction is industrial recruitment and economic development," Dey said. "Greenville's is a fairly typical urban market with families

with jobs and children going to school."

South Carolina is ranked 10th in the nation with a 15.3 percent increase in housing units from 2000 to 2007. In the last census, South Carolina was ranked 15th among the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

The latest estimate shows Nevada leading the pack with a 33.2 percent increase in housing units.

The fastest growing counties in South Carolina based on housing units at Horry (37.7 percent) and York (29.9 percent). Horry was ranked 49th among the top 100 fastest-growing counties, while York was ranked No. 100 on the list.

Six Florida and Georgia counties combined ranked among the top-10 fastest growing counties in the nation.