Upstate population growth called encouraging

By Ron Barnett
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New figures from the U.S. Census Bureau show that the Greenville area continued to grow last year, even as the nation plunged toward a crash in the housing market and the biggest economic slump since the Great Depression.

The Greenville-Mauldin-Easley Metropolitan District grew by 12,148 people, or 2 percent, between July 1, 2007 and July 1, 2008, according to the report released today.

That made this the fourth-fastest growing area in the state behind the area that includes Charlotte and its South Carolina suburbs, Myrtle Beach and Charleston.

"I think it's a very good sign that we're still growing," said Brooke Ferguson, a planner with the Greenville County Planning Commission. "So many other communities are losing people, and we're still gaining."

Her figures show that Greenville County grew faster than the MSA as a whole – by 2.5 percent – to reach a population total of 438,119 on July 1, 2008.

The previous year – between July 2006 and July 2007 – was the biggest growth year for the county since the 2000 Census, with a 2.83 percent rate, she said.

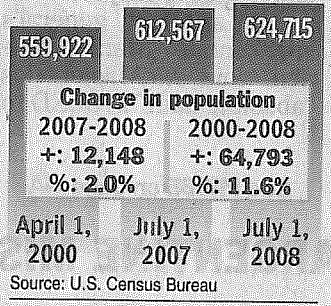
"Although new residential construction has decreased since then, it has not come screeching to a halt as it did in many parts of the country," Ferguson said.

"Greenville County has a lot to offer, and I think the fact that we continue to grow despite the economic downturn is proof of that."

Since 2000, the Greenville-Mauldin-Easley area has grown by 64,793 people, or 11.6 percent, the Census report shows.

Upstate continues population growth

■ Greenville-Mauldin-Easley, Metropolitan Statistical Area population estimates



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

SUZIE RIDDLE / Staff