

Joliet's growth spurt still tops in state

City remains near head of national list

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For the third consecutive year, Joliet was the fastest-growing city in Illinois and remained one of the fastest-growing in the country, while Chicago continued to lose population, according to new U.S. census estimates set to be released Thursday.

Joliet added more than 35,000 people between 2000 and 2006, more than any other city in the state. Joliet's one-year population jump of 6,500 residents between 2005 and 2006 also was tops in the state and was the 12th-highest growth rate of cities of 100,000 or more in the country. Joliet's estimated population for 2006 was 142,702.

Of the 25 fastest-growing large cities in the nation, Joliet is the only one not in the South or the West. Other Illinois towns showing significant growth since 2000 are Aurora, Plainfield, Romeoville, Naperville and Huntley.

A substantial amount of the population increase in these outer suburbs is due to migration from Chicago and Cook County as families seek jobs, better schools and more attractive housing, said Kenneth Johnson, a sociology professor at Loyola University. "This outward sprawl of the population is happening all over the country as domestic migrants are seeking out these suburban edge cities," Johnson said.









Meanwhile, Chicago lost around 63,000 residents from 2000 to 2006. The city's estimated population was 2,833,321 for 2006.

According to many demographers, older urban centers like Chicago continue to lose population as people of childbearing age leave the city for the suburbs and as immigrants chase jobs that are rapidly flowing away from the inner cities.

Only New Orleans, Detroit and Philadelphia lost more people during the same time period. But Chicago's loss was just 2 percent of its 2000 population. New Orleans' loss -- more than half of its population -- was a result of Hurricane Katrina.

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