

County population rises on northern boom

By **JOHN TOMPKINS** | Posted: Sunday, February 20, 2011 2:00 am

Brazoria County is now home to 71,399 more residents than in 2000, and odds are most of those people live north of Highway 6.

Data from the 2010 Census released Thursday shows the county's population at 313,166, up from 241,767 residents reported in the 2000 Census.

While legislators will start redrawing congressional district lines, local officials said it's not yet known how the new numbers will affect restructuring of Brazoria County commissioner precincts.

Most all of that growth comes from Pearland, which saw its population more than double from 37,640 to 91,252 over the past 10 years.

"We thought the number might have been higher," Pearland City Manager Bill Eisen said.

Mandated by the U.S. Constitution, the census is taken every 10 years to gauge the nation's population. Numbers also help determine where federal funds should be used, based on population, and assist in redistricting of political subdivisions. After the 2010 census is finished, seats in the U.S. House of Representatives will be re-allocated to reflect the nation's population shifts.

Communities in the southern part of Brazoria County and west of the Brazos River remained at about the same population or saw a drop in the number of residents.

Freeport's population dropped from 12,708 to 12,049 over the 10-year span. Surfside Beach, hit hard by Hurricane Ike in 2008, lost almost half its residents from 763 in 2000 to 482 today, according to the Census results.

Surfside Beach Mayor Larry Davison was surprised by the drop in residents.

"I'm sure it's storm related," he said, referring to Hurricane Ike.

Despite the storm, Surfside Beach has seen about 40 new homes built on the beach over the past 10 years, he said. The decrease could be due to the fact the town is becoming less of a residential area and more of a tourist destination, Davison said.

Freeport Mayor Larry McDonald said the dip in residents in Freeport is largely due to the lagging economy that hit area industrial companies hard the past two years. McDonald is an electrical and mechanical contractor and lost business during the slump last year.

"They had a lot of layoffs," he said. "My business took some of that toll."

Lake Jackson and Angleton both saw modest population increases but hovered at about the same

number of residents as 2000. Lake Jackson went from 26,386 to 26,849 while Angleton increased from 18,130 to 18,862.

Lake Jackson Mayor Bob Sipple said he expected to see more growth but economic conditions likely stifled growth in the past two years.

“You always want to be in a growth mode,” he said. “The economy wasn’t providing those opportunities.”

With a new subdivision developing near the airport, the city could see a lot more residents over the next 10 years, he said.

“I feel very strongly about our numbers,” he said.

State Sen. Joan Huffman, R-Southside Place, is on the Senate Redistricting Committee and feels it’s too soon to speculate on how Congressional boundaries will change.

“The Census numbers confirmed that Brazoria County’s population is booming, with almost a 30 percent increase over the past decade,” she said in an e-mailed statement. “I am excited to begin working with my colleagues to develop fair and legal maps.”

The Brazoria County Commissioners likely soon will hire consultants to go over the numbers and a committee made of residents will make recommendations for the new precinct boundaries, Precinct 1 Commissioner Dude Payne said. Every Texas county has four commissioners, and the precinct lines are drawn so population is split about evenly amongst the four.

Payne’s precinct runs along the coast and includes many communities in the Brazosport area, which saw little or no growth. His precinct is among the largest geographically and likely will get bigger to even out the population between other precincts.

“I know I’m going to have to grow,” he said. “I just don’t know where.”

Precinct 3 Commissioner Stacy Adams has the smallest precinct geographically, encompassing mostly Pearland and Alvin, areas that saw the strongest growth.

“I think the big changes will be more to the south,” Adams said. “I don’t expect my line to change substantially.”

Precinct 2 and Precinct 4, represented by Commissioners Matt Sebesta and Larry Stanley, also have portions of the Pearland area in their precinct boundaries. Those likely will shift too, though it’s not yet known how, commissioners said.

John Tompkins is senior reporter for The Facts. Contact him at 979-849-8581.

CHANGING COUNTY

Population changes from 2000 to 2010 according to the U.S. Census Bureau

Brazoria County

2010 - 313,166

2000 - 241,767

Alvin

2010 - 24,236

2000 - 21,413

Angleton

2010 - 18,862

2000 - 18,130

Bailey's Prairie

2010 - 727

2000 - 694

Bonney

2010 - 310

2000 - 384

Brazoria

2010 - 3,019

2000 - 2,787

Brookside Village

2010 - 1,523

2000 - 1,960

Clute

2010 - 11,211

2000 - 10,424

Damon

2010 - 552

2000 - 535

Danbury

2010 - 1,715

2000 - 1,611

Freeport

2010 - 12,049

2000 - 12,708

Hillcrest Village

2010 - 730

2000 - 722

Holiday Lakes

2010 - 1,107

2000 - 1,095

Iowa Colony

2010 - 1,170

2000 - 804

Jones Creek

2010 - 2,020

2000 - 2,130

Lake Jackson

2010 - 26,849

2000 - 26,386

Liverpool

2010 - 482

2000 - 404

Manvel

2010 - 5,179

2000 - 3,046

Oyster Creek

2010 - 1,111

2000 - 1,192

Pearland

2010 - 91,252

2000 - 37,640

Quintana

2010 - 56

2000 - 38

Richwood

2010 - 3,510

2000 - 3,012

Rosharon

2010 - 1,152

2000 - not available

Surfside Beach

2010 - 482

2000 - 763

Sweeny

2010 - 3,684

2000 - 3,624

West Columbia

2010 - 3,905

2000 - 4,255

Wild Peach

2010 - 2,452

2000 - 2,498

Source: U.S. Census data