



## **Metro Atlanta's growth slows, but city core booms**

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The City of Atlanta saw its fastest population growth in 40 years, but overall growth in metro Atlanta slowed to its lowest levels in five years, officials with the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) said Thursday, and the housing slump is likely to blame.

According to ARC, the metro population increased by 70,200 people between April 1, 2007 and April 1, 2008. It's the smallest gain in population for the historically fast-growing Atlanta metropolitan area since the recession year of 2003, and is 16 percent lower than the annual average increase recorded during the past decade.

"We're definitely seeing the impact of the national housing slowdown in the metro area, but the City of Atlanta is still booming," said ARC Research Chief Mike Alexander. "In fact, for the first time in at least four decades, the City of Atlanta added more new residents than Gwinnett County."

The City of Atlanta added 13,100 people in the 12-month estimates, its single largest annual gain in nearly 40 years, ARC said.

Fulton County saw the greatest population gains with 17,900 new residents. That number is dramatically lower than last year's increase of 33,000 people. Residents within the Atlanta city limits though accounted for about 73 percent of Fulton's gain. Fulton County also remains the region's largest county by population with an estimated 951,500 people.

Among the counties seeing their growth rates slow were Gwinnett County, which added 12,600, nearly 9,000 off its average of 21,000 new residents per year for the past three decades. Gwinnett's growth still came in second among counties.

Henry County grew by 5,000 people, but its growth rate was down 44 percent from its 8,900 person-per-year clip for this decade. Douglas County grew by 4,500 people, down 55 percent from previous years; Rockdale County and Cherokee County also saw growth but had their annual rates slip.

Fayette County added just an estimated 600 new residents last year, which is 67 percent slower than the 1,800 person annual growth pace it has sustained this decade.

"This is the first significant slowdown in metro Atlanta's growth since the recession earlier this decade," Alexander said. "We rebounded then and we certainly expect to rebound this time."

But several counties also saw big gains.

DeKalb County added 9,200 people this year, up 19 percent over its 7,700-person-per-year average of the decade.

Cobb County also was up 14 percent over the average of years' past, with a gain of 9,500 people. Cobb had posted annual gains of about 8,300 for the decade.