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Macomb County showing gains in population growth

By Gina Joseph, The Macomb Daily

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Population growth in the state, over a five-year period following the devastating recession that ended officially in 2009, has been sluggish. However, most of southeast Michigan's counties have been chugging along, slowly.

Updated numbers from the U.S. Census show growth, between July 1, 2010 and July 1, 2014, in Washtenaw, Oakland, Livingston and Macomb counties. Topping the list of 20 communities in southeast Michigan with largest gains in population, reported by SEMCOG, was Macomb Township, which grew by nearly 5,000 people since 2010.

"It's no different from the year before," said Macomb Township Supervisor Janet Dunn. "We have led the state of Michigan in building permits, for the last 10 years."

Dunn attributes the new growth to a number of factors.

"We have two of the biggest malls in the county just across from our borders. There are good medical facilities here. If it's an emergency, there are several hospitals in the area," Dunn said. People who may have had to travel to Ann Arbor for medical tests will find Macomb Township has several major testing facilities.

"Another reason is our affordable tax rate. It is lower than some communities and likely to stay that way because we have planned ahead," Dunn said. "Our legacy costs, such as retiree health care, are fully funded, so there's no need to raise taxes."

Of the top 20 communities with the largest gains in population, Lyon Township was the fastest growing community, with a growth rate of 14.3 percent, followed by Wixom, Northville, Novi and Macomb Township. Other communities on the list included: Ann Arbor, Dearborn, Rochester Hills, Royal Oak, Troy, Canton Township, Independence Township, Farmington Hills, Pittsfield Township, Orion Township, Clinton Township, Birmingham, Southfield, West Bloomfield Township and Shelby Township, adding more than 40,600 people and 17,300 households to the region.

When Richard Stathakis, moved into the area with his family in 1999, it was Shelby Township's police and fire departments, along with a good school system that attracted him most. Now that he's the supervisor, he still believes safety and schools are deciding factors for people choosing to live in Shelby Township, which showed a 4 percent gain in population between 2010 and 2013. But he also thinks the township's infrastructure, financial stability and park system contribute to Shelby's attractiveness.

"We have invested heavily on our infrastructure, specifically our roads," said Stathakis. "We were able to

offset that with a downsizing of our government. Our employees have done a magnificent job of doing more with less. They've improved their process and figured out how to be more efficient.”

As a whole, Macomb County's population revealed a steady increase from 841,097 in 2010, to 860,112 in 2014, a 1.6 percent change, whereas Michigan's population over the same period, showed a scant three-tenths of a percent, or an increase of 33,379 people, to 9,909,877.

Of the state's 83 counties, 28 had population growth during the five-year period.

-- The Oakland Press reporter Charlie Crumm contributed to this report

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