

Broken Arrow continues to boom

By: CURTIS KILLMAN World Staff Writer
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Census data show that its population is now more than 90,000.

Broken Arrow officially topped the 90,000 population mark in 2007 although city officials believe it is already well on its way to the 100K club.

Figures being released Thursday by the U.S. Census Bureau show Broken Arrow's population was 90,714 as of July 2007, an increase of 2,781 from the prior year.

Statewide, Broken Arrow ranked behind only Oklahoma City in its population increase from 2006 to 2007. Oklahoma City's population grew by 7,358 in just one year to an estimated 547,274 people.

Broken Arrow Mayor Wade McCaleb said the city's current population might be well beyond the official estimate.



OPTIMISTIC Wade McCaleb:

Broken Arrow's mayor expects the city will have 100,000 people in a few years.

"Our estimates are that we are probably about 95,000 people," he said. "We're hoping to hit the 100,000 mark officially at the next census."

The Broken Arrow numbers continue a trend that shows area suburbs to be growing at a faster rate than Tulsa.

Broken Arrow's population increased 3.2 percent from 2006 to 2007. Tulsa's growth for the period was slightly less than 0.4 percent.

Other area cities with large percentage increases in population from 2006 to 2007 were Jenks, 5.5 percent; Owasso, 4.9 percent and Coweta, 3.9 percent.

For Tulsa, the 2007 estimate marks the second consecutive year the city has seen an increase in its population since it peaked at 393,049 in 2000 and then began to decline. Tulsa's 2007 population was estimated to be 384,037.

Tulsa Mayor Kathy Taylor said Oklahoma City could credit much of its population increase to a focused emphasis on improving its downtown housing market.

"They made downtown a neighborhood and the rooftops have followed," she said.

Downtown revitalization, infill development and more affordable housing are key if Tulsa is to continue to increase its population, Taylor said.

"I think it's about housing and making an attractive quality of life," she said. "It's all these pieces Oklahoma City has put together that we are trying to put together."

Broken Arrow remains the fifth-largest city in the state, but that might change soon if McCaleb's current estimate is correct. Broken Arrow trailed Lawton by just 854 people in the 2007 census estimate.

And with just more than half of the city urbanized, McCaleb said, Broken Arrow still has "plenty of room to grow."

Construction is about to begin on about five large subdivisions in the city, he said.

"On the other side is, we have to fund the problems that go with that growth, like hiring more police and fire and things like that," McCaleb said.

The current economy is straining the city's budget, which McCaleb described as status quo compared with that of the previous year.

"We have a very conservative budget this year because we are trying to figure out what the economy is going to do," he said.

But any trends that show suburbs losing population to inner cities as commuters cope with high fuel prices will likely have little impact on Broken Arrow, McCaleb said.

"People move here because it's a safe place to live," he said. "It's a great place to raise a family."

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