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## San Angelo Continues Growth Trend

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San Angelo's population continued a growth trend that has become more acute as the decade progresses, newly released census figures confirmed.

The city grew by 1,099 people from July 1, 2007, to July 1, 2008, according to estimates released Wednesday by the U.S. Census Bureau.

The city's population last year on July 1, according to the new census estimates, was 91,880, up from 90,781 in 2007.

The increase continues a trend that began with the 2006 estimates, which showed a steeper population increase for San Angelo than earlier in the decade, when the population remained nearly static or, in one year, actually went down slightly.

Since the 2000 census, San Angelo's population has risen by 3,441 — an increase of just under 4 percent in eight years — with most of that increase coming in the past three years. The increase occurred in part because in 2008 the census changed the way it counted university students and military personnel in a manner that favored San Angelo. After the change, the census adjusted estimates going back to 2000.

Population increases can happen in two ways: either due to births outnumbering deaths of the natives in a location, or by in-migrants from other areas outnumbering out-migrants leaving the community. Kenneth Stewart, sociology professor at Angelo State University and director of the city and county Complete Count Committee for the 2010 Census, said San Angelo has a higher proportion than the state average of in-migration in its increases. Since 2006, in-migrants accounted for 11 percent of the increase, compared to the state's 7 percent average.

"These numbers show a pattern, where earlier on in the decade we were trailing along," Stewart said about the newcomer statistics.

The key factors to why more people are moving to San Angelo is hard to pinpoint, said Johnny Griffin, Executive Director of Concho Valley Workforce Development Board.

"When you get into analyzing numbers you have to break them down," Griffin said. "If we look at those numbers (specific population statistics) then we could make some kind of evaluation to solve why there's more people."

Stewart was inclined to credit the economy for the steady rise in population over the past few years, due in part to

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opportunities in the renewable energy industry.

"I think there are some sort of economic factors in work here," he said. "Not that our economy is on fire like Silicon Valley, but as we've been moving into the harder economic times, our area is faring a little bit better than other areas."

Griffin said San Angelo's economy doesn't experience major swings, positive or negative. Employers such as Goodfellow Air Force Base, San Angelo Independent School District and the City of San Angelo account for a big sector of the workforce and are "recession proof," he said.

Phil Neighbors, President of the San Angelo Chamber of Commerce, says the city's retail growth is notable in relation to the grim news elsewhere.

"Retail sales have continued to grow," Neighbors said. "It's pretty remarkable the retail sales are up 5.8 percent for the year to date (from November to April)."

He said the increase in retail trade could be attributed to a variety of things, especially more people shopping locally and local businesses doing business with each other.

"When it comes to the baseline, you don't want a community standing still," Stewart said. "It's not like we have booming economic times, but in a time where everything is getting tougher, we are comparatively weathering the tough economic times better than a lot of other locations."

Tom Green County's population grew by more than 1,200, from 106,629 in 2007 to 107,864 last year.

Several Concho Valley towns experienced small increases. Brady grew by 61 to 5,324 and Big Lake gained 57, to 2,666. Bronte, Eden, Eldorado, Mason, Menard, Paint Rock and Sterling City all showed minor gains.

Other communities continued to decline in population. Ballinger, which had a population of 4,233 in 2000, lost 18 people over the past year and fell to 3,724.

#### AREA CENSUS FIGURES

City 2000 2007 2008

San Angelo 88,459 90,781 91,880

Abilene 115,840 116,142 116,484

Alpine 5,920 6,208 6,280

Andrews 9,571 9,675 10,142

Ballinger 4,233 3,742 3,724

Big Lake 2,858 2,609 2,666

Big Spring 25,097 24,049 24,270

Brady 5,497 5,263 5,324

Bronte 1,070 969 977

Brownwood 19,369 19,268 19,140

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Crane 3,152 3,070 3,194  
Del Rio 33,976 36,365 36,682  
Eden 2,555 2,373 2,381  
Eldorado 1,938 1,846 1,853  
Fort Stockton 7,795 7,313 7,526  
Fredericksburg 9,155 10,799 11,098  
Iraan 1,259 1,191 1,228  
City 2000 2007 2008  
Junction 2,629 2,564 2,554  
Llano 3,343 3,261 3,237  
Mason 2,134 2,219 2,222  
McCamey 1,790 1,581 1,643  
Menard 1,650 1,477 1,495  
Mertzson 838 816 806  
Midland 95,012 103,766 106,561  
Miles 849 762 762  
Monahans 6,771 6,290 6,516  
Odessa 90,524 96,724 98,801  
Paint Rock 319 277 280  
Pecos 9,425 7,887 7,804  
Rankin 794 721 749  
San Saba 2,664 2,523 2,499  
Snyder 10,691 10,425 10,406  
Sonora 2,891 3,039 3,037  
Sterling City 1,066 963 978  
Sweetwater 11,372 10,429 10,657  
Winters 2,901 2,570 2,569