

Population up in most Wiregrass counties

Census data shows slight
drop in Barbour County

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Coffee and Houston counties led the Wiregrass in population growth over 2008 with at least 1,000 new residents each, while Barbour County showed a slight decrease, according to U.S. Census Bureau data reported Thursday.

The estimated county populations were from July 2007 to July 2008.

The statistics showed Barbour County lost 151 residents in the year. The 2007 stats showed Eufaula, the county's largest city, lost 70 residents.

Eufaula Mayor Jay Jaxon successfully contested the city's statistics last year, and it was later confirmed the city had gained more than 1,000 residents between 2006 and 2007 versus losing some.

Jaxon questioned whether the decrease that was initially reported that year counted in 2008 against the county as a whole.

"I can't say how much or if wrong numbers affected the county's numbers for 2008, but I do know we received a letter from the Bureau

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showing their numbers for us were wrong then," he said.

The Census Bureau generally develops county population estimates by using administrative records and other data, according to its Web site.

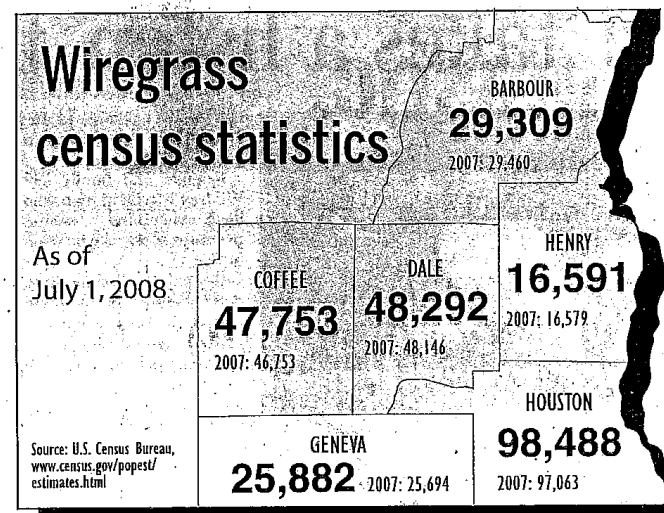
That method showed Dothan led Houston County's growth in 2007 with an increase of 1,625 residents.

Dothan Chamber of Commerce President Matt Parker said he believed Dothan's success was because of its continued trends to promote the community as a place that services the world.

Parker said the city was among the fastest-growing in the state.

"Available housing and diversity of the economy are key," Parker said.

"Then you also have the quality of life in amenities from the golf course to access to water ways to recreation in sports fields.



EAGLE GRAPHIC

You also have the university access and the continued growth in the medical field."

Parker said he predicted Houston County would reach 100,000 people by the time 2010 census stats were reported, and that Dothan, which had a population of 65,447, would have 70,000.