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East Carolina University News Bureau
E-mail to durhamj@ecu.edu  Web site at http://www.news.ecu.edu
252-328-6481 FAX: 252-328-6300
Greenville now 10th biggest N.C. city

Greenville's population is up nearly 26 percent from seven years ago, census figures show.

BY GINGER LIVINGSTON
The Daily Reflector

Greenville grew to North Carolina's 10th largest city in 2007, according to data released earlier this month by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Greenville's population as of July 1, 2007, was 76,058, up from 60,476 when the decennial census results were released in 2001. That is a nearly 26 percent increase in seven years.

"I don't think it was a surprise," said City Manager Wayne Bowers, "because anyone who lives in Greenville sees the growth on a daily basis."

The census numbers are an official confirmation, he said.

Greenville ranked 13th among the state's municipalities in 2001.

This latest survey puts its population above Asheville (73,875 in 2007) and Jacksonville (74,614 in 2007). Of the state's 10 largest cities, only Greenville and Wilmington (99,623) have fewer than 100,000 people.

The figures come from the American Community Survey, a yearly estimate the U.S. Census Bureau does of communities with populations greater than 65,000.

Moving into the top 10 population doesn't create any special advantages, Bowers said.

"When you look at economic development, when people do their first cut of

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possible business locations) they'll look at 10 cities, top five, top 20," he said. "It lets you make a cut you might not have normally made."

What it does mean is a need for additional services, he said, resulting in the City Council’s addition of nine police and four EMS positions to the city budget this fiscal year.

The population increase also indicates that, despite increasing energy costs and an unstable national economy, Greenville's business community continues to grow, said Wanda Yuhas, Pitt County Development Commission executive director.

"When you are growing and prosperous, people want to live here," she said.

The growth's not limited to expansions at the Brody School of Medicine and the hospital, she said. Yuhas called 2008 one of Pitt County's largest investment years among existing and new industries. Yuhas said she didn't have permission to discuss project specifics.

"I think it is pretty widespread across the state that Greenville is a high-growth area," she said.

Also, she said, a number of people work in other parts of the east but make Greenville their home because they need to be near advance medical facilities or want their children in the school system.

Al Delia, president and CEO of North Carolina's Eastern Region, an agency aiding counties in economic development, called Greenville's ranking a sign of eastern North Carolina's rising stock.

"What you've seen in the last couple of decades is the discovery of North Carolina by the nation and the world," Delia said. As the novelty of the Research Triangle Park area and Charlotte wears off, businesses will look to new areas to expand.

"Greenville today is, in some ways, in the same position as Charlotte and Raleigh 20, 25 years ago," he said.

Last year, Greenville had the second fastest growth for a municipality of more than 40,000 (second behind Cary). This year, Greenville is the fifth fastest growing city behind Huntersville, where a growth rate of 9.1 percent put it above the 40,000 mark for the first time; Cary, at 7.2 percent; Raleigh, with 4.2 percent; and Concord, 3.8 percent.

With the U.S. Marine Corps stationing more than 11,500 Marines in Jacksonville in the next several years and continued growth at the medical school, the region will continue to grow.

Will Greenville stay ahead of Jacksonville?

Delia says it's a toss of the coin. The influx of Marines and the ancillary support they attract could put Jacksonville out front again in 2010.

That's OK with the city manager.

"There no contest to be number 10," Bowers said. "The more important fact is the growth is occurring."

Ginger Livingston can be reached at 329-9573 and livingston@coxnc.com.
UNC-CH fundraising tops $300 million, fifth straight record-setting year

CHAPEL HILL — UNC-Chapel Hill's fundraising efforts brought in $300.3 million in gifts in fiscal year 2008, breaking the $300 million mark for the first time.

The total marks the fifth straight record-setting year for this type of support, which accounts for money that is immediately available to the university. UNC-CH raised $250.8 million in gifts in fiscal year 2007.

"This has been another tremendous year at Carolina," said Matt Kupec, UNC-CH's vice chancellor for University Advancement. "Our alumni and friends are sustaining the incredible momentum created by the Carolina First Campaign."

Highlights in 2008 included Wilmington's Fred Eshelman committing $10 million to the School of Pharmacy to close out the university's Carolina First Campaign. That drive ended Dec. 31, after $2.38 billion was raised to support UNC's vision to be the nation's leading public university.

Major support for undergraduate students in 2008 included a $6 million gift from the William R. Kenan Jr. Charitable Trust to help increase the number of students invited to the College of Arts and Sciences' Honors Program.

The gift, which adds faculty to teach honors courses, qualifies for a $3 million grant from the N.C. Distinguished Professors Endowment Trust, bringing the total value of the gift to $9 million.
Kenan plan moves ahead

UNC trustees approve the design for the first phase of Kenan Stadium expansion.

BY SAMUEL SPIES
STAFF WRITER

CHAPEL HILL — Kenan Stadium is a step closer to getting bigger and more luxurious.

The University of North Carolina's Board of Trustees approved the design for a first phase of plans to substantially expand the Tar Heels' football stadium.

The design, approved Wednesday, will add two floors to the Kenan Football Center complex on the west end of the field — one floor of team and recruiting space and one of luxury suites. A large video scoreboard is also in the works but it's not clear exactly where it will go, athletic director Dick Baddour said.

The expansion will add a club area and 16-20 luxury boxes, a first for Kenan. All but two ACC football programs have premium seating, Baddour said. "We're one, and Duke is the other."

Officials plan to start the first phase at the end of this football season and finish it before the 2009 season begins.

Other phases of the project — which need trustees approval later to begin — will fill in the bowl's east end, add another video screen, and build an academic support center for athletes.

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Baddour said the department's primary goal in the expansion was keeping Kenan beautiful. "People are always concerned about the beauty of Kenan Stadium," he said.

Baddour told the trustees the cost of the expansion was $22 million. After the meeting Bruce Runberg, associate vice chancellor for facilities planning, explained that number was an estimate for construction only, and said the total budget for the first phase is $50 million.

In its recent session, the state legislature approved that amount in debt.

A design drawing of the expanded Kenan Football Center at the western side of Kenan Stadium.

Carolina has had tentative plans to renovate Kenan for years, but talk picked up after the university picked former NFL coach Butch Davis to head the football program.

He's already been using expansion plans as a recruiting tool.

samuel.spies@newsobserver.com or (919) 932-2014