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Growth rate slows slightly in southern Warren County

However, with more than 200,000 residents, the county remains one of the country's fastest growing.

By [Tiffany Latta](#)

Staff Writer

Sunday, March 25, 2007

Becky Ehling said Hamilton Twp.'s good schools, rural character and the fact that there's no income tax draw new families into the southern Warren County community like a magnet.

"It's really a beautiful place to live," said Ehling, a township trustee who has lived in the community for 39 years. "I understand why people want to live here. You get the rural atmosphere and still have amenities close by. But whether you're pro-growth or anti-growth, it's obvious that we can only handle so much."

Hamilton Twp. grew from 10,013 to an estimated 16,977 people between 2000 and 2005, and is one of the reasons Warren County ranks among the top 100 fastest-growing counties in the nation.

Hamilton Twp. also expands the biggest population center across southern Warren County.

Residents north of Ohio 63 — in Springboro, Clearcreek Twp., Lebanon, Turtlecreek Twp., Wayneville and Wayne Twp. — are seeing the housing boom, too, but people are moving at a faster rate into Hamilton Twp., and the biggest communities continue to be Mason and Deerfield Twp.

The countywide growth rate is slowing down, however, according to U.S. Census Bureau figures released Thursday.

That doesn't mean people have stopped moving to Warren County. It's location between Dayton and Cincinnati with two interstate highways running through it make Warren County a convenient residential choice.

Warren County's population grew from 159,169 to 201,871, or 26.8 percent, from 2000 to 2006, but the county dropped from 61th to 96th on the census list because the rate of growth slowed.

From 2004 to 2005, Warren County's population grew 3.67 percent. From 2005 to 2006, the population grew 2.58 percent — under 3 percent for the first time in six years, according to Census Bureau estimates.

The county's rank on the top 100 list has continued to slide since 2003 when it ranked 45th on the census list.

Hamilton Twp.'s community development director, Gary Boeres, said the downturn is partly a result of the soft housing market which is evident in southern Warren County.

Boeres said the number of building permits issued in Hamilton Twp. dropped from 667 in 2001 to 341 in 2006. Clearcreek Twp. experienced a similar drop, from 269 in 2005 to 212 in 2006.

Ehling, who has been trying to slow growth in the area for 10 years, is relieved that the growth is slowing down.

She said the population boom has placed a strain on the schools, roads, and police and fire officials.

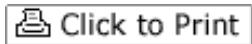
Ehling said trustees have revised zoning ordinances and are considering implementing mandatory impact fees to reduce the strain.

"I don't want to see it change," Ehling said, referring to Hamilton Twp.'s rural atmosphere.

"I see the drop in numbers as a blessing, because it gives us a chance to get a hold of things."

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