

POPULATION

Community Vision 2028

“Because we live in an area of exceptional natural beauty, we effectively balance our needs with the environment. As responsible stewards, we consistently make choices that respect the land and water.” – Kezziah Watkins Report

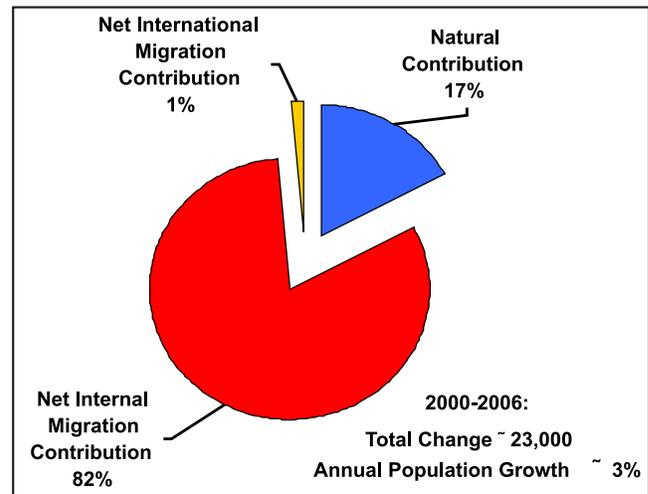
“Nobody has a better grip on the long view than the people who live here.” – Kezziah Watkins Report

Population Analysis

The population data reflects annual population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau (the Census). These estimates are generated for all U.S. counties and are comparable between geographic areas and over time. Although individual states often prepare their own population estimates, the Census population estimates are the most frequently used because of their comparability and coverage. In addition to population estimates, the Census also estimates the sources of population growth by county. These estimates show population changes driven by natural contributions (births and deaths), net international migration, and net migration. This data can be accessed from U.S. Census at www.census.gov.

As of 2006, the County’s estimated population was nearly 132,000. Since the 2000 Census, the County has added nearly 23,000 new residents. This reflects an average annual growth rate of just over 3%, or three times higher than the U.S. growth rate of 1% over the same period. This is slightly lower than the County’s 3.5% average growth rate over 1970–2000. Figure 1 shows that over 80% of new residents since 2000 represent in-migration from another county or country. In particular, more than 98% of the County’s in-migration came from somewhere else in the U.S. (the data does not specify the starting location).

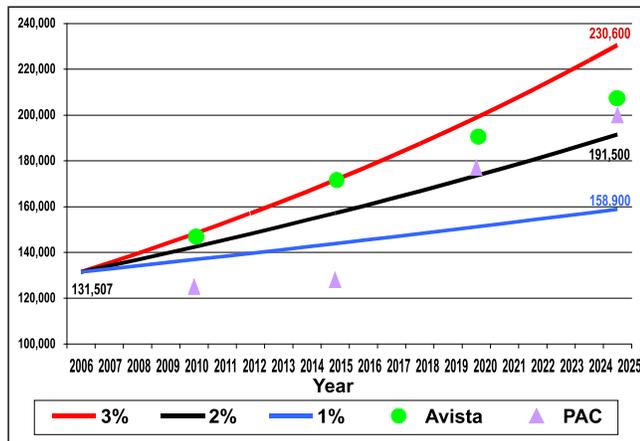
Figure 1: Sources of Population Growth in Kootenai County, 2000-2006



Assuming the County will continue to grow between 1% (the current U.S. rate) and 3% over the next 20 years, its population will fall between 160,000 and 240,000 by 2025 as shown in Figure 2. The current forecast from Avista Corporation (the region’s primary regulated utility) is for a population of approximately 207,000 by 2025, which translates into an average annual growth rate of 2.4% after 2006. Likewise, the Panhandle Area Council (a nonprofit, regional economic development organization for the five northern counties) is forecasting a population of 200,000 by 2025, which translates into an average annual growth rate of 2.2%. However, the intermediate forecasts of both organizations differ substantially. *(These population forecasts are available in the Spokane-Kootenai County Real Estate Research Report.)*

Regardless of the population forecast, Figure 2 highlights the power of compounding that is, small differences in growth rates translate into large differences in ending population totals. The difference between 3% and 2% may not seem large, but the projected difference in population by 2016 is close to 30,000, and by 2025 it is over 70,000. Expressed another way, at 3% the population will double approximately every 23 years, and at 2% it doubles every 35 years a difference of more than 10 years. For this reason it is important that historical trends in population growth are considered and population growth and trends are not under-estimated.

Figure 2: Current and Projected Population Growth in Kootenai County, 2006–2025



Analysis of the Census data reveals that Kootenai County’s population age distribution in the year 2000 is extremely similar to the 1990 figures. There has been only a slight increase in the median age (from 35 to 36). Kootenai County’s Census 2000 median age of 36.1 is higher than that of the state (33.2) and the U.S. (35.3).

The two largest age groups in the year 2000 were ages 5 to 19 (23.1% of the population) and ages 35–49 (23.3% of the population). These two age categories have remained relatively stable but are slightly increased compared with 1990 figures.

In 2000, 33.7% of Kootenai County’s population lived in the unincorporated area of the County. This is only a slight increase over the related figure of 33.2%. However, it is of interest to note that the unincorporated resident population was up to 43.1% in 1980; and stood at 39.6% in 1990. This fluctuation is attributable to several factors, including births, deaths, and migration. However, it is influenced most heavily by annexation of unincorporated lands into the County’s Cities. This clearly demonstrates a trend of a decreasing percentage of the overall County’s population living in the unincorporated County. The Plan envisions this trend to continue and directs high-density growth into the cities that have the capacity to provide urban level services. This is a characteristic that the success of this Plan will be judged on.

Population data made available by the Idaho Department of Commerce and Labor in October of 2005 estimates that the 2005 population of Kootenai County was 122,971, representing a 13% increase in the five years since the 2000 Census. Another estimate of the County’s 2005 population referenced in the Kootenai Metropolitan Planning Organization’s 2007 Transportation and Human Services Plan is even higher at 127,668 (a 17.5% increase). Between 1990 and 2000, the fastest-growing city in Kootenai County was Post Falls, which experienced a 135% population increase in that decade.

The County’s population density has also been increasing. Population density is an important figure because it represents how many people there are in relation to the amount of land within a given boundary. It can be a good tool for community planning and a useful general indicator of how intensely the land is being developed.

Kootenai County has the third-highest density in the state (Ada County has the highest density 285; Clark County has the lowest 0.6)

Future Population Trends

Based on recent population trends and current forecasts, it is likely that population growth will exceed the U.S. rate of 1% for the next 10 years. Therefore, even though growth rates can fluctuate considerably from year to year, an average annual growth rate of at least 2% for the next 10 years would not be unreasonable to assume for the planning process.

Both the unincorporated and incorporated areas of the County have experienced moderate to strong population increases over the last decade. This trend is expected to continue in the future. Using the U.S Census population estimate, the County’s population will have increased by 53% between 2005 and 2030. Future population growth in unincorporated areas can be proactively limited, if so desired, through a variety of growth strategies.

City population growth also needs consideration for future planning in the unincorporated County. City population growth affects County interests primarily due to city resident use of public lands in the unincorporated areas.

GOALS AND POLICIES

The goals and policies in this chapter are intended to articulate the community vision toward the regions anticipated population growth and not to be regulatory, but provide specific guidance for the adoption and implementation of development regulations which will ensure conformity with The Plan.

GOAL 1: Monitor trends and establish adjustment mechanisms.

Policies and Implementation Strategies

P-1 A. Explore the establishment of social indicators and the possibility of conducting social impact assessments, and incorporating such assessments into future planning processes.

P-1 B. Conduct quarterly data gathering and review of countywide housing permits.

P-1 C. Identify data sources to track population traits between U.S. Census counts and conduct annual comparisons to Census count history and to population projections.

P-1 D. Identify and document trend changes and resulting implications.

P-1 E. Present annual reports on population change information to the Planning Commission for purpose of comparison with forecasted expectations and consistency with the goals and policies of this chapter.

P-1 F. Formulate recommendations, based on annual reports on population change, to the Board of County Commissioners for chapter amendment, as deemed necessary by the Planning Commission.

GOAL 2: Anticipate continuing growth and development demand. Guide future development to encourage orderly infill.

Policies and Implementation Strategies

P-2 A. Coordinate with adjoining counties and cities regarding regional planning. Support the goals and objectives of the Plan.

P-2 B. Task the Planning Commission with Ongoing comprehensive evaluation of population and demographic data forecasts.