

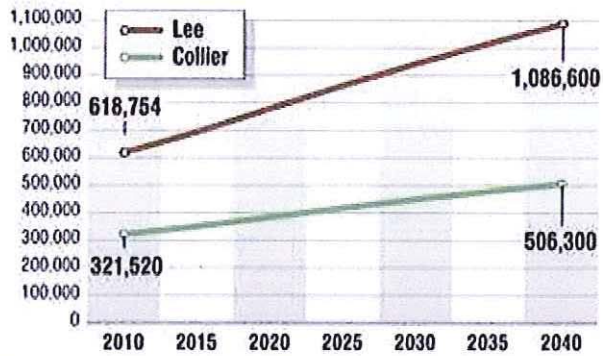
UF study sees million-plus in Lee

Population prognostication is for 2035

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Projected growth

Projected population totals in Lee and Collier counties through 2040:



SOURCE: UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

THE NEWS PRESS

More than 1 million people are projected to be living in Lee County within 25 years, according to a study released Monday by the University of Florida.

That revelation comes even though the statistics show that the state's population growth has slowed to its lowest level in more than 60 years.

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Still, said Stan Smith, director of the university's Bureau of Economic and Business Research, "there still will be pretty substantial growth."

The University of Florida projection sets Lee's population at 1,016,900 in 2035, a 75 percent increase over the 618,754 counted in last year's census. And in the next three decades, Lee is

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predicted to be No. 4 in total population gain (467,846), behind only Orange, Miami-Dade and Hillsborough counties.

“This is basically an extrapolation of previous trends,” Smith said. He said he and his UF team use an historical base over a 15-year period to arrive at their predictions as well as birth rates, death rates and in-state migration, among other criteria.

In Collier County, population is expected to be more than a half-million by 2040, an increase of about 60 percent over the 321,520 in the 2010 census.

The state had been on a breakneck pace of expansion for about 20 years until the recession began in 2008. It crippled the housing boom and sent hundreds of thousands of workers packing.

Even though there has been a slowdown, Smith said Florida will continue adding between 2 million and 2.5 million new residents in each of the next three decades. By 2040, the state's population is expected to be more than 26 million, and by then Florida is expected to be the nation's third largest state behind California and Texas. It is fourth now, just behind No. 3 New York.

“Fueled by an expanding economy and a booming housing market, population increases from 2003 to 2006 were among the largest in Florida's history,” Smith said. “As economic growth slowed and the housing market cooled later in the decade, population growth declined as well, reaching its lowest levels in more than 60 years.”