

Port St. Lucie News

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St. Lucie County 13th fastest-growing county in nation

The U.S. Census ranking was from 2004 to 2005

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ST. LUCIE COUNTY — When Paul and Kari Monty moved to Tradition from Palm Beach County last year, they were looking for somewhere a little less crowded.

“I actually had been looking at St. Lucie County for a couple of years,” Paul said. “Originally, we looked at it because of cost of living being less but really that wasn’t main reason, it was the area. It was a lot like Palm Beach County used to be — not as overpopulated as it is now.”

The Montys are among the new residents who contributed to more national recognition for St. Lucie County: The U.S. Census Bureau ranked it the 13th fastest growing county in the United States from 2004 to 2005.

The study, being made public today, estimated St. Lucie County grew by 14,195 people, to a total population of 241,305, during that time period.

“I don’t think it came as a surprise to anybody. We expected it,” County Commissioner Frannie Hutchinson said.

Hutchinson said that several years ago a campaign was launched encouraging people to “Discover St. Lucie County.”

“Well, it got discovered,” Hutchinson said.

Don Root, executive director of the St. Lucie County Economic Development Council, said the county’s ranking gives it more recognition in attracting businesses to the area.

“It puts us more on a national stage,” Root said. “It’s all about recognition and about being known...they (prospective businesses) are going to want to take a look at what’s going on.”



Kari Monty, 29, plays with Shockey, one of her two Shih Tsus as her husband Paul, 36, works on his laptop at their home in the Bedford Park neighborhood of Tradition in Port St. Lucie on Wednesday. The couple, who work in telecommunications out of their home, moved to St. Lucie County to get away from crowded Palm Beach County in June 2005.

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The census bureau study ranked the 100 fastest growing counties in the country. Neither Martin or Indian River counties made the list.

Besides St. Lucie, two other Florida counties made the top 20: Flagler — which was No. 1 — and Sumter, which ranked 17th.

In St. Lucie County, much of the growth has come in Port St. Lucie, where city officials estimate the current population at 141,000. But increasingly, major housing developments are underway or being planned in northern St. Lucie County.

“From everything we see at this end, we don’t see any real let up in the growth in the foreseeable future,” County Administrator Doug Anderson said. “With the baby boomers getting ready to retire, it will only assist in continuing this high-growth pattern, and obviously that puts a lot of pressure on local government.”

Anderson said growth issues are “on the front burner,” with county officials working on transportation studies and on plans to expand county utilities.

“We’re planning on how we’re going to be able to keep up with this growth while at the same time have necessary infrastructure in place,” Anderson said.