



Real Estate

America's Fastest-Growing Suburbs

Matt Woolsey, 07.16.07, 6:00 PM ET

Los Angeles is sometimes called the "Sultan of Sprawl." But you wouldn't know it by looking at the country's fastest-growing suburbs. Not a single one falls in the L.A. metropolitan area.

Instead, Angelinos are packing their bags and heading 60 miles east to San Bernardino, where twelve of the country's 100 fastest-growing suburbs are located. Leading the pack? [Beaumont](#). It has experienced 130% growth since 2000.

It's easy to understand why. Home prices in the Riverside-San Bernardino metropolitan area are 30% less expensive than in L.A. Add comparable household incomes to the mix, and the move from the basin to the valley makes sense.

In Pictures: America's Fastest-Growing Suburbs

Chart: America's Fastest-Growing Suburbs

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So much sense that San Bernardino's rate of net domestic migration has near quadrupled since 1990, while the Los Angeles metro posted negative net migration figures over that same period. Last year, it lost 72,000 more residents than it gained.

Our list was compiled using U.S. Census growth data from 2000 to 2006 and provided by Demographia, a St. Louis-based research firm. Since a city's metropolitan statistical area is defined by the counties it encompasses, Demographia excluded those outlying towns which were in suburban counties but didn't have significant economic and social ties to the big city. Suburbs included cities, townships and villages that had more than 10,000 people in 2000.

Behind The Numbers

The fastest-growing suburb in the country is [Lincoln, Calif.](#), just outside Sacramento. Its population jumped from 11,746 to 39,566, or an increase of 236%. The fastest-growing big suburb (with a population of 100,000 or more) is [Gilbert, Ariz.](#), outside Phoenix, which expanded from 112,766 people to 191,517.

While not cheap by national standards, the growth in Sacramento's outerlying areas is strong because it's a less-expensive alternative to Los Angeles, San Francisco or San Diego. The Phoenix area saw the greatest positive domestic migration of any American metro last year, with 115,000 more people moving into town than leaving. Affordable housing and a growing economy draw a lot of people to the city.

But with sprawl comes both pros and cons.

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In Texas, for example, geographic growth is almost completely unregulated. Not surprisingly, the Lone Star State has the lion's share of the country's top-growth suburbs, 20, 12 of which are in the Dallas-Forth Worth metro area.

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As a result, these areas have some of the most affordable homes in the nation, since there is plenty of supply to meet demand. But transportation expenses are often high. In Houston, such costs are the No. 1 household expense, according to the Brookings Institute.

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Cities that engage in restrictive growth policies find themselves with different trade offs. In Boston's inner suburbs, including Chelsea and Cambridge, zoning and growth restrictions designed to prevent sprawl backfire because they force people to look farther outside the city for affordable housing. According to the same Brookings Institute study, metros with growth exclusion plans like Boston have the most expensive housing stock in the country since there is a limited supply of homes close to the city.

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This becomes particularly problematic in northeastern and Rust-Belt cities that are losing population. Places like Phoenix and Las Vegas are spreading out faster than Boston, but they are doing so more efficiently, meaning with a more concentrated population.

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Last year, just over 16,000 more people left the Boston metro area than moved in, yet the suburbs continued to expand geographically. The result is a thinning of the area, which makes Boston more of a sprawl, if sprawl is defined as the density of population over a geographic space.

Rounding out the top 10 fastest-growing suburbs after Lincoln were four Phoenix suburbs: [Buckeye](#), [Surprise](#), [Goodyear](#) and [Avondale](#); [Plainfield](#), outside of Chicago; [Beaumont](#), outside San Bernardino, Calif.; [Frisco](#) and [Wylie](#) outside of Dallas; and [Woodstock](#), outside of Atlanta.

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RANK	CITY	STATE	2000	2006	%
1	Lincoln	California	11,746	39,566	236.8%
2	Buckeye	Arizona	10,147	29,615	191.9%
3	Surprise	Arizona	32,342	85,914	165.6%
4	Goodyear	Arizona	19,495	47,359	142.9%
5	Plainfield	Illinois	13,666	31,968	133.9%
6	Beaumont	California	11,343	23,623	108.0%
7	Frisco	Texas	35,299	80,499	128.0%
8	Wylie	Texas	15,810	33,333	108.0%
9	Avondale	Arizona	37,261	75,403	102.4%
10	Woodstock	Georgia	10,697	21,482	100.8%
11	Cedar Park	Texas	26,926	52,058	93.3%
12	Brentwood	California	24,757	47,547	92.1%
13	McKinney	Texas	56,087	107,530	91.7%
14	Oswego	Illinois	13,814	26,252	90.0%
15	Castle Rock	Colorado	20,907	39,682	89.8%