

City is still positioned for growth

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Editorial

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Owensboro is still keeping its nose just ahead of Bowling Green in the race for the title of "Kentucky's third-largest city," according to the latest estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Pride is what's most at stake in this pseudo-competition, but the important fact is that Owensboro continues to grow, even if it's at a glacial pace.

We won't have more accurate numbers until the 2010 census, but population estimates released last week show Owensboro with 55,525 residents on July 1, 2006, 154 more people than the year before. That may not seem like much, especially compared to Bowling Green's growing by 920, but it's at least movement in the right direction. Paducah, Hopkinsville and Evansville have all lost population since the 2000 census, while Owensboro is up 1,200 in that time span.

Owensboro has managed to grow despite much of the housing development of the past decade occurring outside the city limits. It has kept pace ahead of Bowling Green despite not having a large public university or an interstate highway.

But Owensboro's growth shouldn't be judged a success or failure as it compares to Bowling Green's. It should be judged on how we're moving the community forward and making it a place new people want to be and current residents want to remain.

Last week we got the first glimpse of some plans for a tax increment financing district along Kentucky 54, which would include an arena, convention center, hotel, retail shopping and other amenities. While such a plan is no done deal, its success would have a huge positive impact on Owensboro. We hear rumors there may be another proposal for downtown as well.

And let's not forget that the plans for reshaping the riverfront into a showplace are still ongoing, which will add to the quality of life residents here already enjoy.

Significant growth is always incumbent on quality job creation, and we're interested to hear the chamber of commerce's idea for drawing more attention to "northwestern Kentucky" that chamber president Jody Wassmer mentioned last week.

While many people work on positioning Owensboro for the upcoming decades in the job market, the efforts mentioned above are the sorts of ventures a community needs to take to keep growing and being a vital part of the state and region.

Regardless where Owensboro ranks among the largest Kentucky cities, pieces are being put in place to ensure growth continues. As long as we're growing, we're winning the race.