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St. George in Top Ten for Fastest Growing Population

Source: *Utah Business Magazine*

Three of Utah's metros were included in the top-ten fastest growing metropolitan areas in a report released by the Census Bureau this month. Provo-Orem, Logan and St. George metro area all made the top-ten. The reports list 363 metropolitan areas throughout the nation.

The Provo-Orem metro area saw population growth of 3.4 percent which was the sixth highest in the nation. Logan metro area ranked ninth nationally with 3.2 percent increase and coming in at number ten was the St. George metro area with a 3.1 percent increase.

While the bulk of Utah's population growth came via natural growth, which is the difference between births and deaths in a year, one-third of Utah's growth came from in-migration from outside the State. This is an indication of Utah's overall economic strength.

Although the economy has slowed down, it is still outperforming most of the nation and is maintaining a substantially lower unemployment rate. This would indicate that we will still continue to see an increase in net in-migration to the state. "Business leaders and individuals, even internationally, are recognizing the long term trends in Utah. The State is being recognized as a long term 'hot spot' and companies must plan for the long-term; they want stability and security," says, Pam Perlich, senior research economist at the University of Utah.

In addition to having a young well educated labor force, the fact that many people are relocating to Utah in search of quality employment adds to Utah's attractiveness when companies are looking to expand or relocate. These facts are recognized as positive considerations for companies who are in a growth mode, despite the general economic downturn. Successful companies must plan for the long-term and the trends of in-migration, natural growth and a young well educated workforce all bode well for the State.

Perlich continues, "Our economy is diversifying toward industries of growth. It's not like Michigan, even though we're losing some industrial base, even if we are currently losing jobs, we're not as bad as Michigan. Where are the people in Michigan and other states with double digit unemployment going to go? They're going to come to places like this."

According to Jason Perry executive director of the Governor's Office of Economic Development, "we find among companies looking to grow that generally the top three motivators in a relocation or expansion are first workforce, then location and overall cost of doing business. By focusing our economic development efforts on industries with long-term viability, Utah has both broadened and strengthened its economic base."

The greatest source of Utah's population increase is by natural growth. The Provo-Orem area gained approximately 21 people per 1,000 residents via natural growth last year. This ranked them number two in the nation. The national average is 6.2 per 1,000. Logan ranked third with 20.7 per 1,000. Ogden, St. George and Salt Lake City metro areas were all in the top fifteen nationally.

Utah's growth was not constrained only to large metropolitan areas. Ten of the nations 100 fastest growing counties made the list as well: Rich (9), Piute (17), Juab (28), Duchesne (38), San Juan (40), Tooele and Morgan (43), Sanpete (56), Utah (81) and Cache counties (87). Also making the cut for the fastest growing metro areas in the country were Ogden-Clearfield (2.7 percent) at 18th and Salt Lake City metro (1.9 percent) at number 59th. This growth in population will continue to feed the growing Utah economy and give many more businesses an incentive to relocate their business operations to the state. This long-term planning will benefit Utah workers and their communities for many decades to come.

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