

continues downward at middle of century

11,325 residents here; forty years later in 1940, the census was 9,831. The highest census count was in 1930, when the population reached 11,701. The population in 2000 had dropped to only 5,953.

The City of Norton in 2000 had a census count of 3,012, representing a little over half of the total population in the county. The loss of population has had an effect on growth in the area. Many of the businesses that were here in the 1950s, 60s and 70s have closed. Few new housing permits have been issued, and in the years of 2008 and 2009, no permits for new houses were issued for the City of Norton.

Recognizing the need, the city and county became aggressive in the pursuit of economic growth. Together, they established the Norton County Economic Development Board, which is a countywide partnership dedicated to enhancing the economic strength of the county by recruiting new employers, retaining existing firms and improving the quality

of life for all of Norton County.

Board members include two Norton City Council members, two County Commissioners, six city appointees and two county appointees. The director, Scott Sproul, is a paid county employee. The Economic Development board has a budget of \$111,000 a year that is funded by the city and county.

Even though the population has declined over the years, the city and county are growing. New businesses that have popped up and old businesses that are reinventing themselves are a positive step in the effort to keep Norton in the forefront of the communities of northwestern Kansas.

The Northwest Kansas Technical College is starting outreach classes with the intent of opening a satellite campus in Norton. Colby Community College has had classes available in Norton for some time, and a partnership with the Norton County Hospital has produced licensed and practical nurses and nurse's aides for many years.

Sheridan County towns, rural areas show declines

In 1878, Sheridan County had a population of about 200 people, 200 horses, 50 mules, 100 milk cows, 5,000 cattle and 50 swine, according to the First Biennial Report of the state Board of Agriculture to the Kansas Legislature.

It's grown since then.

To the towns in Sheridan County, though, the numbers coming out of the 2010 census will only point down. In 2000, Hoxie, the county seat, had a population of 2,813, down from 3,043 in 1990. According to Wikipedia, in 2004 Hoxie had about 1,158 people, and the numbers have dropped steadily ever since, about 11.3 percent from 2000 to 2007.

Selden, which had 201 people in 103 households in 2000, dropped to 186 in 2004. In 1990, the city had 248 people.

The county as a whole, including unincorporated towns and rural areas, had 3,043 people in 1990 and 2,813 in 2000. No record of how many cows.

This year, the estimated population is 2,435, down 378.

This should come as no surprise for what the U.S. Census Bureau lists as a frontier

Sheridan County Population

Population now - 2,347
 Population one year ago - 2,435
 Population five years ago - 2,526
 Population 10 years ago - 2,813
 Population 50 years ago - 4,267
 Trend - Dropping an average of 37 people a year.

county, with fewer than six persons per square mile. Sheridan County has between three and four per square mile.

The real story, however, lies in the census figures for the entire 20th century. Only twice - in 1910 and again in 1930 - did the population actually increase over a decade. In 1910, the biggest boom came as the county grew 48 percent to 5,651. In 1930, it grew 10.1 percent to the all-time high of 6,038. Since then it has grown smaller by anywhere between 230 and 726 people every 10 years.

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