

POPULATION STUDY

Introduction

A prerequisite for preparation of the Comprehensive Plan is knowledge of the most probably number and location of persons expected to reside in the Village and Town of Herkimer in the future. This Population Study, by providing an estimate of future population growth, establishes a basis from which future planning needs can be determined. This study covers the past population growth and the factors causing this growth, and number, age composition and distribution of the present population, primarily in the urbanized areas of the Town and the Village, and the expected future population growth.

In any study such as this, where the total population of the community is comparatively small, any population prediction embodies a potentially large degree of error. Factors which would not appreciably alter the over-all picture in a large urban area may completely change the situation when concerned with a smaller population. A new industrial plant, or a housing development primarily for people who commute to a nearby central city for employment, will easily cause a considerable change in expected population figures. The economic level of activity in a small urban area is also of great importance, and, as in Herkimer, the efforts of the citizens in the promotion of economic development may have a considerable effect upon future population growth. For these reasons, the results of this study should be considered to be valid only so long as the assumptions upon which this forecast are based are substantially as set forth. The

study will provide a point from which to start future planning, and as conditions change and new information becomes available the estimates of future population growth should be re-evaluated along with the other determining elements of the Plan, in order that the Plan may continue to be in accord with the needs and desires of the community.

Past Trends and Growth Factors

By 1900, the Mohawk Valley Region had already become a highly industrialized area, with population concentrated in urban areas, according to U.S. Bureau of the Census Reports. Herkimer County, for example had a population of 51,049 in 1900 and the population in the communities of Little Falls, Herkimer, Mohawk, Ilion and Frankfort was 25,766, or 50.1 percent of the county population. From 1900 to 1960, while county population increased by 15,321, the population of the five communities increased by 10,169. In other words, 66.4 percent or two-thirds of the population increase occurred within the limits of these municipalities.

During this 60 year period, the county population increased rapidly until 1920 and then decreased until 1940 when the total population again began to rise. These changes in the county population are reflected in the population of individual communities according to the U S. Bureau of the Census and as shown in the graph of population, 1900-1980. All increased rapidly until 1920 when the population peak was reached, then either began to fall or to remain fairly static until 1930. From 1930 to 1950 most communities suffered a general decrease in population though by 1940 Ilion and Mohawk had started to increase again.

These changes in population are a result of two factors, natural increase and migration. Natural increase is the increase in population due to the greater number of births over deaths and is dependent upon the fertility and mortality rates. Migration is the net result of in-migration and out-migration.

The rapid rise in the population during the period of 1900-1920 was primarily the result of the considerable in-migration from other countries, particularly those in the Mediterranean area. This migration was cut drastically in the early 1920's and the result on population growth is clearly seen. From this time on, and especially because of the depressed economic conditions, out-migration became the controlling factor. This is particularly evident in Little Falls, where the population has continued to decrease from its peak in 1920 and is now considerably below its 1900 figure. In 1960 for the first time during the 60 year period both Ilion and Herkimer have larger populations than Little Falls. Today Ilion is the fastest growing of the five communities, probably due for the most part to the industrial activity in that community. Mohawk also is growing, though at a slower rate than Ilion. Herkimer and Frankfort are both nearly static according to these census figures.

While the census figures cited above indicate a static condition within the Village of Herkimer, indications can be seen in the recent activity of housing construction that this is not completely true. It would seem that the decline noted between 1940 and 1950 probably continued until about 1955 when the trend was reversed and, by 1960 this increase had brought the population count to the 1950 level. This would be still a relatively small degree of activity.