

By Cassandra Shofar
CShofar@News-Herald.com

As Ohio continues to age, some cities, like Painesville, have discovered fountains of youth.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the Lake County city's population has increased over the last decade by 11.8 percent, or from 17,503 people to 19,563 people.

That growth is so impressive that it makes Painesville the fastest-growing city between Cleveland and Niagara Falls, N.Y., according to a data analysis performed by Downtown Painesville Organization Director Doug Nagy.

"I think one of the things is that Lake Erie College is becoming much more of a residential college and we're also one of the 10 youngest cities in Ohio along with Oxford, Athens and Bowling Green," Nagy said. "One of the things that's happening in the state as a whole is getting older and so it's nice that Painesville became younger in the latest Census, and in part, that's due to the huge growth in size of Lake Erie College."

Nagy said his analysis of Census data included only incorporated areas, and not townships, between Cleveland and Niagara Falls.

Nagy also attributes the city of Painesville's population growth to a few major residential developments that have recently come to fruition, such as Cobblestone Court, Heisley Park and Liberty Greens.

"We've also refocused on rebuilding our existing historic buildings, so there's been a ton of reinvestment in the historic portions of Painesville," Nagy said. "The downtown area has seen a lot of reinvestment over the last couple of years and more buildings have been turned into loft apartments, so more people are living in the downtown district."

Growth at Lake Erie College also has spurred turning entire apartment units once for rent by the general public into dormitories.

"There's been four huge complexes that the school has rented out," Nagy said. "A growing population is great in every area because it brings in more dollars and more investment into the community. There's a lot of discussion now about how Cuyahoga County as a whole is losing people and in Painesville, we're growing extremely fast."

Nagy said roughly two residents per day have moved into Painesville, Painesville Township or Concord Township during the last 20 years.

"There's new life coming into our old buildings downtown," he said. "The turnout of our downtown events has increased and since 2007, we've had over a dozen businesses move into the downtown area."