

Clovis led Valley cities in growth during 2014, state says

By Marc Benjamin



Home construction at Harlan Ranch is seen in a January 2014 file photo. JOHN WALKER — THE FRESNO BEE

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- *Population in Clovis grew by 2.4% last year*
- *Fresno remained California's fifth largest city*
- *Some Valley cities with state prisons lost population in 2014*

Population growth		
Population grew in the Central Valley's largest cities in 2014.		
	2014	2015
Fresno	516,148	520,159
Visalia	129,481	130,753
Clovis	101,012	104,339



Clovis was one of California's fastest-growing cities in 2014, with a growth rate that beat all but two other cities with more than 100,000 residents, according to state Department of Finance estimates.

Clovis now has a population of 104,339, making it the 67th largest among California's 482 cities. Clovis' growth rate was 2.4%. The only cities with more than 100,000 residents growing at a faster rate were Irvine and Temecula, both in Southern California.

"It's really a continuation of what was happening before the recession," said Tina Sumner, Clovis economic and community development director. "The quality of life in Clovis continues to be a draw... it's the schools, it's a safe

place to live, it's a clean, nice-looking community with good amenities.”

Much of the new growth has focused in the Loma Vista community near Clovis East High School on the southeastern edge of the city. Future growth is planned east of Willow Avenue between Shepherd and Copper avenues.

Fresno grew by more than 4,000 residents — 0.8% — to a population of 520,159. Fresno, which remains the state's fifth largest city, has about 40,000 residents more than the sixth largest city, Sacramento, but is well behind San Francisco, the state's fourth largest city with 845,602 residents.

Overall, Fresno County grew by nearly 9,000 residents, remaining the 10th largest of the state's 58 counties and largest in the San Joaquin Valley with 972,297 residents. California's population is now 38.7 million.

The state's efforts to shift low-risk offenders from state prisons to local jails had an impact on some Valley cities.

Corcoran and Chowchilla each lost almost 2% of residents, directly related to changes in the state prison population, said Doug Kuczynski, a research program specialist for the state Department of Finance in Sacramento. Chowchilla lost 414 inmates, a 1.9% decline, which was the fifth largest percentage decrease for a city statewide, and Corcoran had the sixth largest drop at 1.8%, reduced by 374 inmates, he said.

Avenal, another city with a state prison, lost 43 residents, but inmates accounted for only 9 of those residents, Kuczynski said.

By comparison, several Kern County cities, including Shafter and McFarland, experienced significant proportional gains in 2014 thanks to an influx of prisoners at local jail facilities.

In Fresno County, Reedley, Fowler and Sanger each grew by more than 1%. Reedley's growth rate was 1.8% and at 25,488 residents it remains the county's third largest city — just 360 residents more than Sanger.

Orange Cove, where the population dropped by 16 residents from 7,374 to 7,358, or 0.2%, was the only city in Fresno County to lose residents. The populations of Firebaugh, Huron and San Joaquin did not change last year.

Dinuba was Tulare County's fastest-growing city with a growth rate of 1.5% in 2014 and grew to a population of 23,966. Visalia grew by 1% to 130,753 residents, making it the 43rd largest city in California and far and away the largest in Tulare County. The city of Tulare was second-largest, growing at 1% to 62,363 residents.

In Kings County, which shrank by 0.1%, Hanford grew by 1% to 55,804 while in Madera County the city of Madera grew 1.5% to 63,961, the highest growth rates in each of those counties.

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