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Press Enterprise (Riverside, CA)

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SECTION: LOCAL; Pg. B01**LENGTH:** 503 words**HEADLINE:** Bulging valley has new look;**GROWTH:** The booming San Jacinto region will keep changing in age, ethnicity and lifestyles.**BYLINE:** HERBERT ATIENZA; THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE**BODY:**

HEMET

The San Jacinto Valley retains vestiges of its retirement haven past, but its growth could bring about major demographic changes, according to an area researcher.

Douglas Johnson, a senior research associate at Claremont McKenna College's The **Rose Institute** of State and Local Government, said the growth in the valley is in line with that of the Inland region, which is fueled by more companies and people looking for more affordable places to live and do business.

"It's fascinating to look at this region," Johnson told attendees of the luncheon hosted Friday by the Hemet-San Jacinto Action Group, an informal networking group of businessmen and community leaders. "This area is somewhat isolated from what's going on in the Coachella Valley and Temecula . . . but is starting to experience those types of growth."

He said the growth rates over the past four years far exceed that of the state: Hemet grew 8.5 percent, to 63,800 residents, while San Jacinto grew 12.3 percent, to 26,700 residents.

The growth rates compare with 6.7 percent for California, 15 percent for Riverside County and 10.4 percent for San Bernardino County, he said.

Johnson said the upward trend means cities can expect younger people and families relocating to the valley. Among them will be more Latinos and foreign-born residents, changing the ethnic makeup of the community as well.

"There are certain things that attract people to move here, and one of those is the quality of life," Hemet Councilman Marc Searl said. "The growth is affecting our lifestyle, our schools, the traffic circulation in our valley."

Richard Giese, president of Mount San Jacinto Community College District, said the valley needs to take an aggressive approach as the swelling number of students puts more stress on educational

demands.

"The growth is going to take place," said Giese, adding that college's enrollment of about 11,000 students could grow to more than 50,000 in the next 20 years.

Howard Rosenthal, a local businessman and immediate past president of the Action Group, said the valley's growth could focus the need for communities to speak with a unified voice, perhaps by forming one city encompassing Hemet, San Jacinto and outlying unincorporated areas.

"We need to have a debate about how we value our identity as residents of the valley and how to retain and improve on our ability to define ourselves and not have someone else do it for us," he said.

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GROWTH IN THE SAN JACINTO VALLEY AREA

While slightly slower than the county as a whole, San Jacinto and Hemet have seen steady growth between 2000 and 2004:

San Jacinto: 23,779 to 26,700 (12.3 percent increase)

Hemet: 58,812 to 63,800 (8.5 percent)

Riverside Co.: 1,545,387 to 1,776,700 (15 percent)

California: 33,871,648 to 36,144,000 (6.7 percent)

Source: **Rose Institute** of State and Local Government

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