

**POLITICS**

# Real estate: COVID continues shift from cities to suburbs. Where people moved.

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After waiting out the coronavirus pandemic in East Hampton and living on the Upper West Side of Manhattan for six years, Patty Magrin decided she was ready to move north to Westchester County.

She wasn't alone.

Magrin, an account executive in tech leasing, has been part of a growing cohort of New York City residents who have sought domicile in communities away from the city during the coronavirus pandemic.

Throughout the region, there continues to be an exodus of people leaving cities like the five boroughs and Philadelphia for the suburbs of New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New York, a review of change of address records from the U.S. Postal Service showed.

"I loved the subway, but now you start to think about the fact that when you're on the subway you are literally pressed against other people, and COVID has made us conscious of that," Magrin said.

The shift may have an impact on more than just the housing market.

U.S. 2020 Census data out later this month will be used to determine how many U.S. House seats each state will have in 2022, meaning population shifts from one state to another could mean less or more representation in Congress.

New York is poised to lose one or two House seats in 2022 due to population declines in recent years.

Pennsylvania and Rhode Island are among other Northeast states that are expected to each lose one House seat next year, according to a December report by Election Data Services Inc., a political consulting firm that studies redistricting.

"Under the back-dated April 2020 data, New York would only see a single seat loss, instead keeping their 26th seat (seat #435) by only 20,337 people," the group said. "But the July population estimates shows New York losing two congressional districts."

## **By the numbers**

The Postal Service data obtained by the USA TODAY Network New York through a Freedom of Information request showed nearly half a million people changed addresses out of or within New York City in 2020.

Other findings from 2020:

416,078 New York City residents changed addresses in 2020, but only 44% of them changed addresses within the state.

More New York City residents moved to Hudson (10,769) and Bergen (9,508) counties in New Jersey than to the Bronx or Staten Island in 2020.

About 83,000 New Yorkers moved within New York City or from the city to Long Island and the Mid-Hudson Valley.

Of New York City residents who moved in 2020, 166,959 out of the 182,895, or 91%, went to Long Island, New York City and the Hudson Valley.

About 1,300 moved even farther north to Monroe County, which is home to Rochester, and 74 New York City residents moved to neighboring Ontario County.

After Florida, the states to which most New Jersey residents moved in 2020 were Pennsylvania, New York and Delaware.

In the Keystone State, nearly 73,000 people from Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Lehigh, Montgomery and Northampton counties changed addresses in 2020.

After New Jersey (54,688), the states most New York City residents flocked to were Florida (31,268), Connecticut (23,287) and California (21,872).

The records from the Postal Service correlate with real estate sales over the past year.

According to the Hudson Gateway Association of Realtors, a trade group tracking home sales in the Bronx, Westchester, Putnam, Orange, Rockland and Sullivan, all six counties saw total home sales increase on a year-over-year basis the last three months of 2020 and the first three months of 2021.

After Westchester with 6,657 sales over that stretch, the counties that recorded the most single family home sales in 2020 in the lower Hudson Valley were Orange (3,984), Rockland (2,327), Putnam (1,261) and Sullivan (1,232).

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## **Impact on the U.S. Census count**

The movement caused by the pandemic and the hot housing market will have an impact on the Census results that will be coming out through the year.

About \$500 billion in government spending is tied to what will be the first decennial census ever taken during a global pandemic.

From seats in Congress to future Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Medicare spending, the census determines how much each state receives from the federal government for the next decade.

In New York, April 1, 2020, marked the first day of the census count, coming exactly one month after the first case of coronavirus was reported.

So some experts are concerned about the accuracy of the figures this year.

“If you lived in an area that was particularly hit by COVID at that point in time, and New York City being one of them, there will be concerns, obviously, on not having an accurate count – and that has an impact on resources that come to that region,” Jose Pagan, a professor of public health policy and management at New York University, said.

All individuals residing in the U.S. were required by law to complete the census.

Homes in New York received an invitation to participate in the 2020 census by mail before April 1. And participants were given the opportunity to respond online, by phone or by mail.

But with the coronavirus pandemic raging, the count came amid a highly transient time, particularly in the tri-state area.

Rapid movements of people, like when college students are forced to return home due to a global pandemic, are likely to throw off total counts, Pagan said.

“Any sudden shift will impact a community if that shift is not somehow counted in the census.” he said.

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## **Delayed results**

The Census Bureau postponed the date of the data release to March 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic, and it moved again to September 2021, but some will be released by month's end to help with the political reapportionment.

Preliminary figures from the Census Bureau released last year showed New York lost more residents than any other state in the country at 126,355 between July 2019 and July 2020.

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The Albany-based think tank Empire Center for Public Policy estimated last year that nearly 1.4 million New Yorkers left the state between 2010 and 2019. The report, which used IRS data, found 21% of New Yorkers moved to Florida while 16% moved to New Jersey.

The decennial census of 1930 was the last one that resulted in New York gaining seats in Congress. Back then, the state held 45 seats in Congress; now it is down to 27.

Magrin, a native of Connecticut, is leaving Manhattan for a condominium at a 55-and-over community in Rye, Westchester County — and is excited to do it.

"Even post-COVID, I think to myself, do I really want to be kind of pressed like sardines against everybody else?" she said of commuting by subway in Manhattan.

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