

# Buffalo leads charge to region

## Migration from IA

U.S. Census Bureau data show New York is the No. 1 source of newcomers to the nine-county Charlotte region from outside the Carolinas. An estimated 13,000 people move here from the Empire State annually.

As a result, neighborhoods around Charlotte are filling with people who prefer beef on weck (roast beef on a special salty roll) and white-hots (spicy white hot dogs) to barbecue and pimento cheese.

Upstate New York-oriented restaurants such as Tavern on the Tracks in South End and Township Grille in Matthews are thriving. And the area will be the first place outside Buffalo for expansion of the Anchor Bar, pioneer of the famed Buffalo wings (slated to open near Concord Mills mall and in uptown Charlotte later this year).

Plenty of transplants come from New York City and Long Island, but the upstate has specific economic pressures behind the migration pattern.

Business and civic leaders haven't been able to replace the jobs lost as steel, automotive and other manufacturers shed workers. Housing prices have languished.

Why the Carolinas?

Better weather, for one. Also, it's roughly a one-day drive from the upstate. In recent years, the pipeline of previously arrived friends and family members has also fueled the trend.

Here, New York transplants become part of the growth pressures straining roads and schools and sparking retail and cultural development. Back home, their departures cause the opposite pressures, with governments struggling to cope with declining tax bases and theater companies closing.

### An upstate N.Y. exodus

Jobs were the lure for Scott and Jean McMullen, who moved to Indian Land, just over the S.C. border from Charlotte, during Christmas week. They came from a suburb of Rochester, about 60 miles from Buffalo.

Scott McMullen has been a machine designer for 28 years. But he has watched his trade decline as major employers, including Delphi Automotive, Eastman Kodak and Xerox, cut back in New York.

"For my last six months, I'd sit at my desk with nothing to do," he said.

He and his wife had talked of retiring to the Carolinas since they began visiting area beaches in the early 1990s. Fearing a layoff, they decided to speed up their plans.

McMullen got a job with Bosch Rexroth, a manufacturer with facilities in southwest Mecklenburg. Jean McMullen, who worked in information systems, figures she'll have an easier time getting a job here.

An older daughter already lived in Winston-Salem. Daughter Katie, 22, a recent graduate of SUNY-Brockport, has joined them, and a younger daughter still in college in New York will be here for the summer.

Katie McMullen said her fellow graduates are taking jobs in Texas, Florida and elsewhere - but almost none in upstate New York.

"I thought, if everyone else is leaving, it's not bad for me to leave now," she said.

Soon after arriving, the family shopped at a local Macy's. A saleswoman recognized their accents and asked whether they were from Buffalo. But in Food Lion, they had trouble understanding a clerk's deep Southern drawl.

"Everything she said, it was like, 'I'm sorry, pardon me?'" Jean McMullen said.

### 'A no-brainer'

In the early 1990s, Greg Moran was a real estate agent in Buffalo. He got to know the wife of Bill Polian, then general manager of the Buffalo Bills and later the Carolina Panthers' first general manager.

That led to Moran's first Charlotte visit. It was a warm February day 13 years ago, and he saw construction cranes all over. "This is a no-brainer for someone getting into real estate," he recalled thinking.

Two weeks later, he moved here. He has since maintained a network of real-estate contacts in Buffalo and estimates he has sold at least 15 Charlotte homes to people from there.

"It's just dying up there," he said. "All the young kids, as soon as they're out of high school or college - they don't go back."

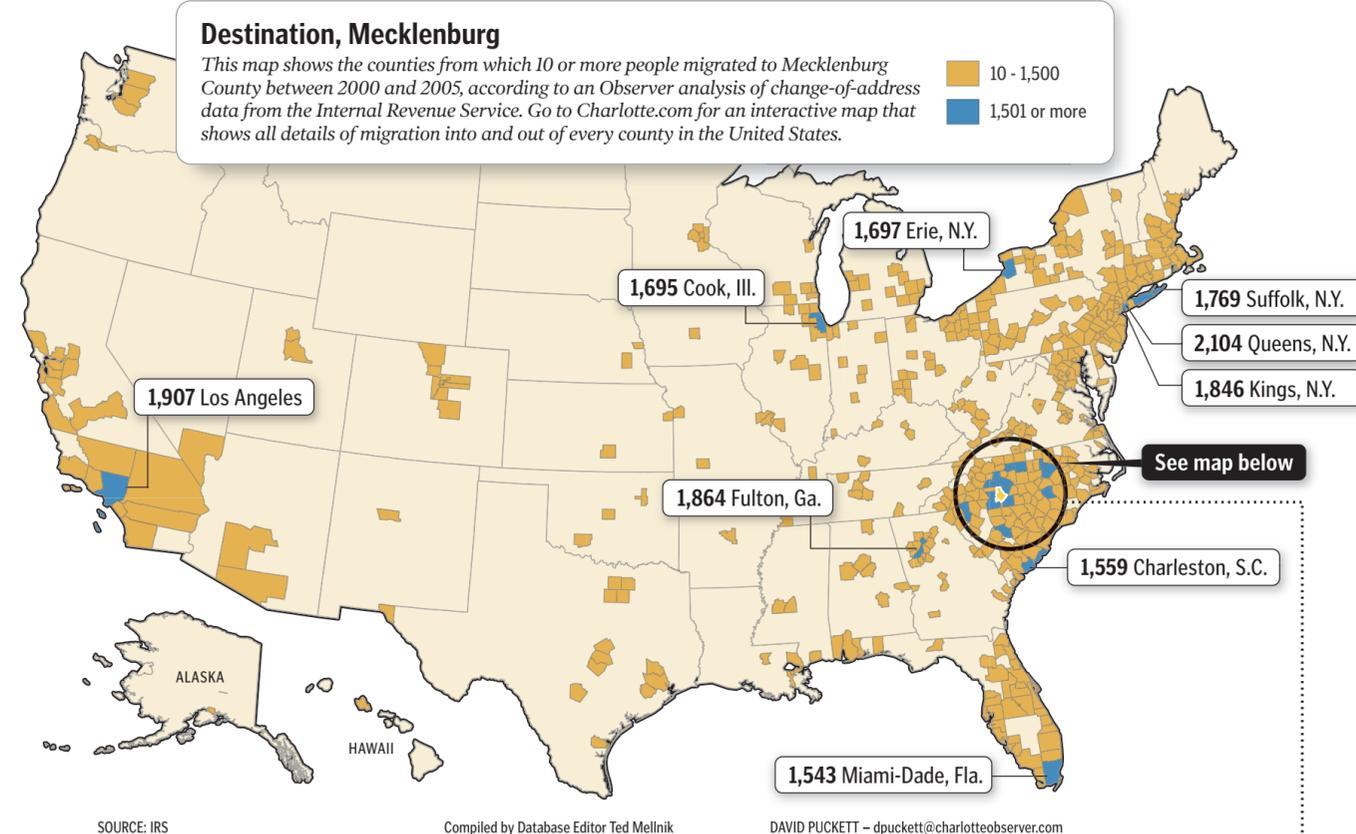
Moran and other Buffalo transplants gathered at Tavern on the Tracks last summer to watch a preseason game between the Bills and Panthers.

In the parking lot that day, wearing a Bills jersey, was Tim Horner, 32. He was among a group of four friends who drove down from Buffalo nine years ago to find jobs here.

"I would say once a week, I meet somebody from Buffalo (in Charlotte) who I didn't know before," he said. "It's like a home away from home."

The McMullens are aware they're in a region undergoing a growth spurt. "Holy cow - all this construction, and the red clay in the roads. They're building everywhere," said Jean McMullen.

As far as regional differences go,



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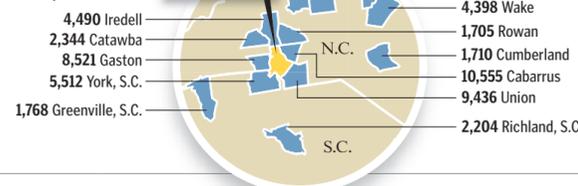
**Chuck Wilson, who moved to the Charlotte region from Buffalo, N.Y., in 1994, erects a Bills flag while tailgating before attending last summer's pre-season game between the Bills and Panthers. Below: Former Buffalo residents Greg Moran of Charlotte (left), Josh Zach of Raleigh and Greg Kasza of Charlotte meet at Tavern on the Tracks before the game.**



Scott McMullen said the family will adjust. "I'm still in America. And it still feels like America. The only thing they don't have here is white-hots."  
 — DATABASE EDITOR TED MELLNIK CONTRIBUTED.  
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### Top 14 in the Carolinas

Counties in North and South Carolina with more than 1,500 residents moving to Mecklenburg County.



### What the Experts Say

About why New Yorkers, particularly from the upstate, are moving to the Charlotte region:

- Pat Riley, president, Allen Tate Co.: New York is the top state of origin for the real estate company's relocating clients. "The tougher the climate, the more apt they are (to look at North Carolina)," he said. "New York (transplants) are driven by 'I want to get away from something.'"
- Peter Rogerson, professor of geography at University at Buffalo: "Our economy just isn't doing that well, and it's been that way for a while. We just haven't gotten a lot of new jobs."
- Tony Crumbley, vice president for research at the Charlotte Chamber, on the more than 80,000 new jobs announced in Mecklenburg from 2000 to 2005: "Our quality of life and our ability to generate jobs have made us a magnet."
- Andrew Rudnick, president and CEO of Buffalo-Niagara Partnership, on trying to lure new industry to upstate New York: "People follow jobs; that's Economics 101. We're the poster child for that principle."

### More for Newcomers

See columns for newcomers Saturdays in New Home, Sundays in Arts & Living and Mondays in the Your Week sections. See extensive resources from the annual Living Here newcomer magazine, plus the New Around Town blog, at www.charlotte.com/living. And see the Observer's newcomer reports with news partner WCNC on the 6 News Today broadcasts at 5 a.m. and 11 a.m. Mondays.

## REGIONAL CHURN REFLECTS WIDE VARIETY OF OPTIONS

# Mecklenburg exodus, influx strong

### Residents left for nearby counties more often than vice versa during 2000-05

BY ADAM BELL  
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Mecklenburg County residents leave at a far greater rate for nearby counties than the other way around.

Nearly 75,000 people moved out of Mecklenburg and into another county in the region between 2000 and 2005, according to an Observer analysis of IRS address data.

But a steady flow of traffic still comes into Mecklenburg from across the Charlotte region; 44,000 people relocated to Mecklenburg during that time, the analysis shows.

The figures reflect a constant regional churn, and it is not always tilted so dramatically away from Mecklenburg. So for instance, while 9,944 people moved out of Mecklenburg for Gaston County between 2000 and 2005, an additional 8,521 headed from Gaston into Mecklenburg during that time.

That includes 26-year-old Ryan Clark.

He grew up in a rural corner of Gaston County, then studied architecture at UNC Charlotte. After graduation in 2003, he moved back home and commuted to work in Charlotte's South End neighborhood. But the 45-minute drive each way got old fast.

"I like driving, but I don't like driving that much," Clark said. So he moved into Charlotte and recently bought a

condo two blocks from his office.

There's still plenty of movement into other counties.

For instance, more than twice as many people moved from Mecklenburg to Union than the other way around, often seeking lower taxes and a smaller school system.

Tony Crumbley, vice president of research with the Charlotte Chamber, is not surprised by the steady movement throughout the area.

As housing, jobs, shopping and other options continue to grow in the region, he said people can find whatever lifestyle they are looking for, including million-dollar homes in Union County and white-collar jobs in Iredell County.

"It's truly an urbanization of the region," Crumbley said.

Crumbley said if you asked someone in Union County 20 years ago where they were from, they would say Monroe. Ask the same question today of folks in communities such as Waxhaw, and they're just as likely to say Charlotte, he said.

As for Clark, he remains satisfied for now with his condo and his walk to work. When he eventually marries and has kids, however, he plans to get a new address - back in Gaston.

— DATABASE EDITOR TED MELLNIK CONTRIBUTED.  
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### Mecklenburg, in and out

An Observer analysis of data from the U.S. Internal Revenue Service shows frequent migration around the Charlotte region. Far more people move out of Mecklenburg to Cabarrus, Union and York counties than move in from those places. But in Gaston and Iredell, the gap was much smaller.

