

# Memorandum

## City of Lawrence

### Planning and Development Services

**TO:** David L. Corliss, City Manager

**FROM:** Amy Miller, Long-Range Planner  
David Guntert, GIS Planner

**CC:** Scott McCullough, Planning & Development Services Director

**Date:** March 7, 2013

**RE:** Census 2010 Analysis and the Census Count Question Resolution Program.

**Overview:**

The U.S. Census Bureau is mandated by the Constitution to count every resident in the United States through the decennial census program that takes place every ten years. The count took place during Spring 2010 and the majority of the data has been released.

Staff submitted a [challenge](#) of the 2010 Decennial Census figures under the Census Count Question Resolution (CQR) Program in November of 2012. Three types of challenges were allowed under the CQR program: Boundary, Geocoding or Coverage. The city submitted a challenge based on coverage, which as defined by the Census Bureau, is to "add or delete specific living quarters and people associated with them, identified during the census process, but erroneously included as duplicates or excluded due to processing errors."<sup>1</sup> Staff believes that the housing unit count produced from the Decennial Census and its associated survey process is not accurate and believed under that challenge criteria, that the Census Bureau would modify the housing count and change the population figure.

	Housing Units	Population
2010 Decennial Census	37,502	87,643
<b>2010 Staff Estimate</b>	<b>38,884</b>	<b>92,727</b>
2010 Census American Community Survey	38,667	92,718
2012 CQR Challenge Figures <sup>2</sup>	38,095	Approx. 90,000

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.census.gov/2010census/pdf/count\\_resolution\\_brochure\\_030811.pdf](http://www.census.gov/2010census/pdf/count_resolution_brochure_030811.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> 2012 CQR Challenge figures did not include every housing unit staff believes to be missing from the 2010 Decennial Census figures. Staff presented documentation under the challenge that identified blocks that had the highest housing unit discrepancies.

On March 5, 2013, staff received a [letter](#) from the Census Bureau detailing their determination of the city's challenge under the CQR program. The letter acknowledges that there were errors in "geographic placement of housing units and/or group quarters to census tabulation blocks" and updated census tract and block counts. In the table attached to the letter, the Bureau provided updated housing unit counts for certain blocks where housing units were initially counted in the wrong block. While the letter acknowledges errors related to the placement of units, the Census Bureau did not add the additional units submitted in the challenge to the overall 2010 Decennial Census housing unit count or subsequent population figures.

Staff spoke with the Census Bureau's CQR office<sup>3</sup> who verified that the Census Bureau was unable to add housing units or subsequent population because the omission of the housing units was not caused by an error that was admissible under the CQR program. Admissible errors are only those concerning geographic boundaries and the processing of data already collected in the census enumeration or survey process. Staff was not alleging an error in boundaries or processing of data, but disagreed with the outcome of the survey's housing unit count in comparison to our local numbers. Staff has learned in follow up discussions subsequent to receiving the letter that these types of errors or disagreements are not challengeable. It is also worth noting that other cities have had the same challenge with the CQR program and the Decennial Census figures, most notably New York City.

The City identified clear discrepancies in the outcome of the decennial census count of housing units and population in Lawrence. Unfortunately, no mechanism exists to correct those numbers in relationship to the 2010 Decennial Census figures. Staff believes, with verbal concurrence from the Census Bureau, that the best data is produced at the local level, with our own records, and therefore believes that our own population estimates and housing unit counts should be used, in conjunction with Census data, when analyzing population growth. Staff will work with the Census Bureau to examine the issue and improve procedures to insure that we obtain a more accurate count during the 2020 Census.

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<sup>3</sup> CQR Office Phone Number: 301-763-9329