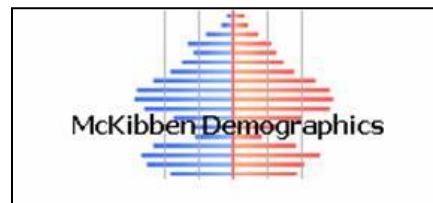


2010 U.S. Census: Count Question Resolution for the City of Atlanta



Originally Presented to the Department of Planning and
Community Development: March 20, 2013



INTRODUCTION

- The City of Atlanta's 2010 Census population count was 420,003, an increase of 3,559 from a 2000 population of 416,474. The population was 100,000 lower than any pre Census estimate-including the US Census 2009 estimate of 540,000+.
- Such a big discrepancy between the 2010 Census and earlier population estimates for Atlanta pointed to a potential undercount.
- The Count Question Resolution (CQR) Program is the Census Bureau's mechanism for local governments to challenge the 2010 Census population counts for housing units and group quarters. What can be challenged?
 - **Geographic boundaries** – Inaccurate recording of a community's legal boundaries as of January 1, 2010.
 - **Geocoding issues** – Inaccurate placement/omission of living quarters and associated population.
 - **Coverage** – Housing units and group quarters were not included in the census count. If a challenge is upheld, the Census Bureau will make adjustments of populations living in omitted housing units/group quarters, after consideration of potential duplicates or processing errors.

CONSULTANT TEAM & ROLES

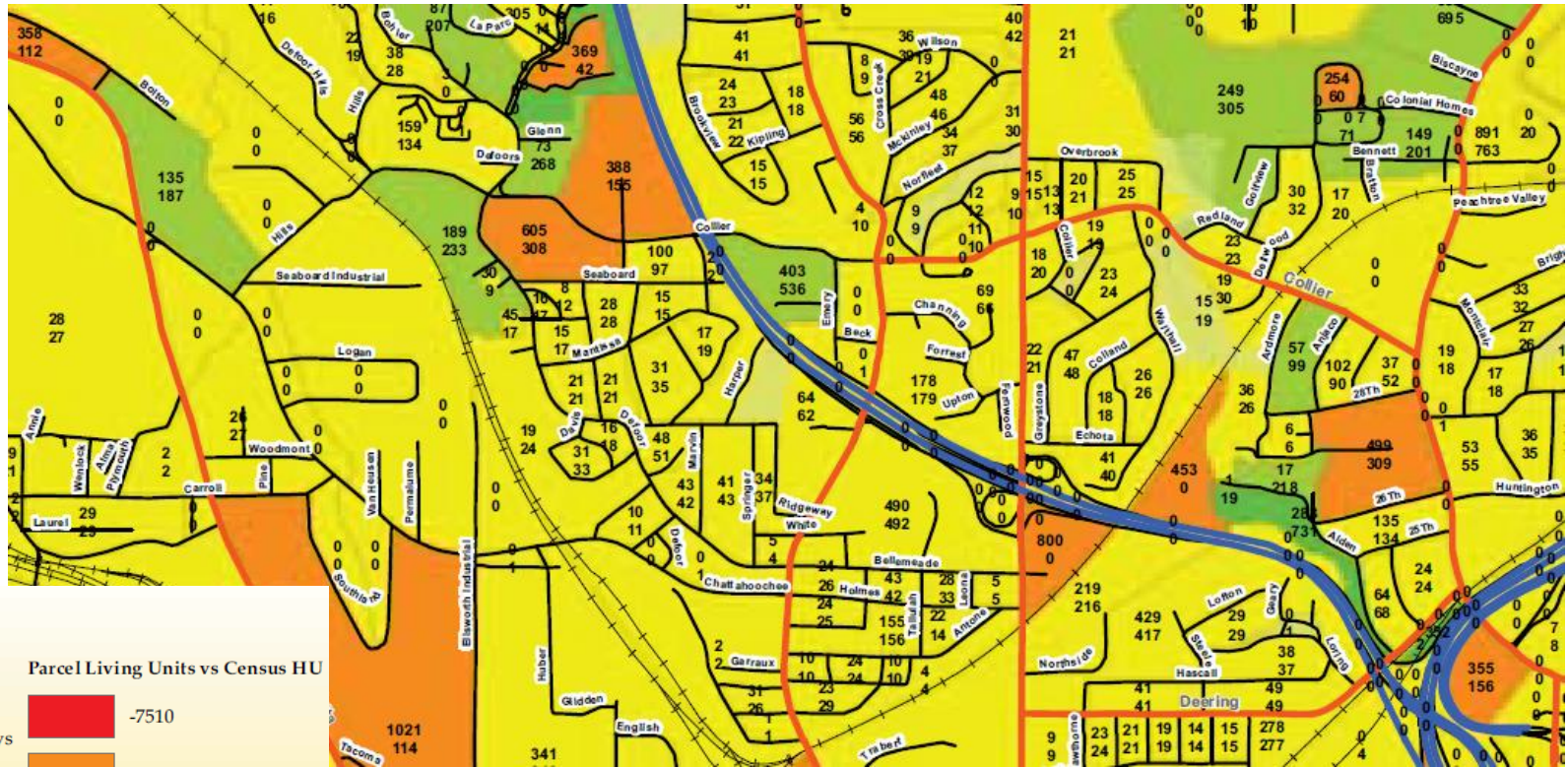
- In 2012, the City of Atlanta retained a consulting team to prepare a challenge of the City's 2010 Census population. The consultant team included:
 - Cropper GIS
 - Mapping and data analysis
 - Address verification
 - McKibben Demographics
 - Housing unit count resolution
 - CQR challenge documentation
 - Bleakly Advisory Group, Inc.
 - Prime contractor/contract management
 - Group quarters

- The Consultants worked with the Department of Planning and Community Development, who coordinated with City staff from other departments as needed.

CQR METHODOLOGY

- Given the requirements of the 2010 CQR Program, the consultant team completed the following tasks:
 - Collected and analyzed information on housing units and group quarters at the block level (about 6,000 blocks) as provided by the City Planning Department, Fulton County Assessor's office Atlanta Public Schools, Atlanta Regional Commission, Atlanta Housing Authority and other sources.
 - Identified and mapped census block groups where there were significant discrepancies (and evidence of a possible Census undercount) between the number of living units reported in the 2010 Census versus data generated by local sources.
 - Field checked census blocks in question to determine whether housing units and group quarters were either omitted by the Census or inaccurately counted by local sources.
 - Worked with the City Planning Department to prepare mapping and address lists for living units which appear to have been omitted by the 2010 Census.
 - Prepared required CQR documentation for submission.

MAP 1 – INITIAL FIELD SURVEY



Legend

- Interstate
- US and State Hwys
- Local Roads
- Railroads
- Airport runway
- Airport area
- Water

Parcel Living Units vs Census HU

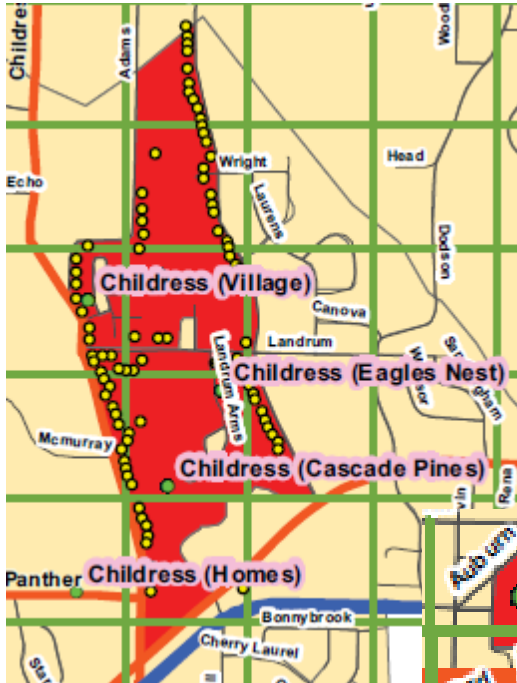
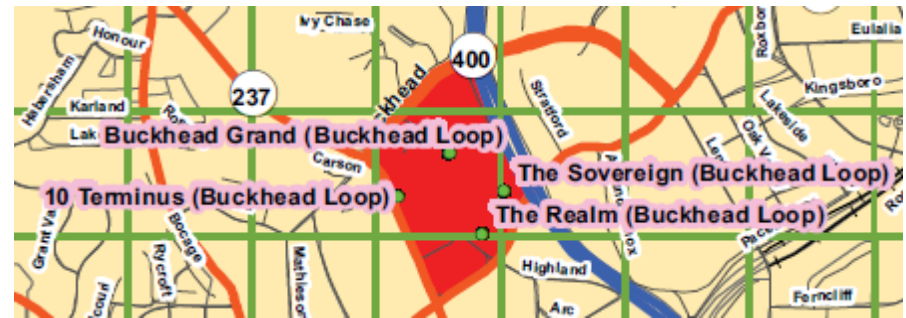
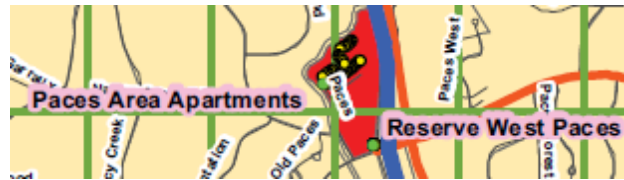
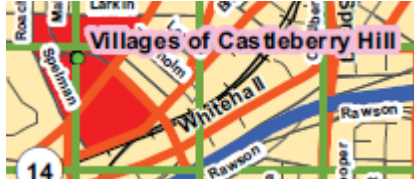
	-7510
	-7509 - -180
	-179 - 40
	41 - 201
	202 - 893

Map Note:
The top label represents the City reported Living Units and the bottom label represents the Census 2010 reported Housing Units. The black labels in each block represent the parcel living units.

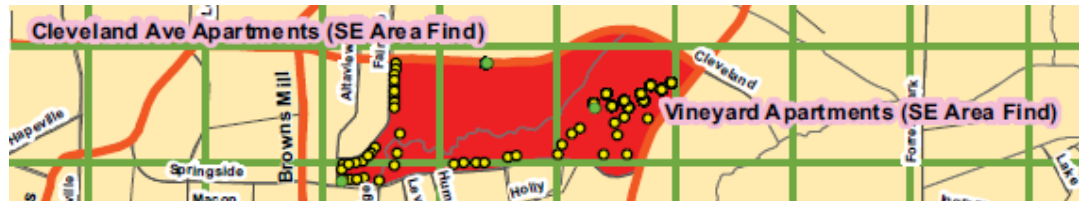
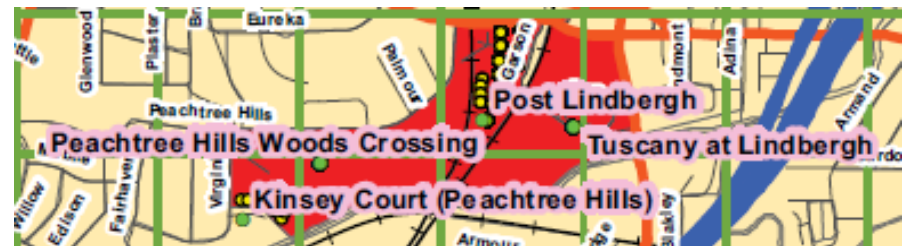
CQR HOUSING RESEARCH RESULTS

- Based on initial mapping analysis and prior work in the City, the consultant team initially estimated that the Census had possibly undercounted Atlanta's housing supply by +/- 10,000 units.
 - These initial estimates were based on a comparison between Fulton County Assessors' data base/unit counts and 2010 Census unit counts for corresponding census blocks.
- After extensive field research, it was found that in some parts of Atlanta, County assessment data produced inflated housing unit estimates due to the following factors:
 - Some properties attributed with a livable dwelling unit were never constructed or completed.
 - Several public housing complexes that were counted as livable units in the County data had actually been demolished or abandoned.
- Data inconsistencies were identified across the City, with most of the error concentrated on the west side.
- After field research, findings concluded that the 2010 Census undercounted/omitted fewer housing units than the 10,000 + which were initially estimated.
- Identified omissions were still significant however, and totaled **3,244 units**.
 - Housing unit undercount was identified in 27 census blocks.
 - Undercounts were found in scattered locations throughout the City.
 - Largest undercounted housing types were gated communities / apartment complexes.

MAP 2 – FINAL HOUSING UNIT MAP



The CQR process identified **3,244 housing units** which appear to have been omitted from 2010 Census mapping.



CQR GROUP QUARTERS RESEARCH

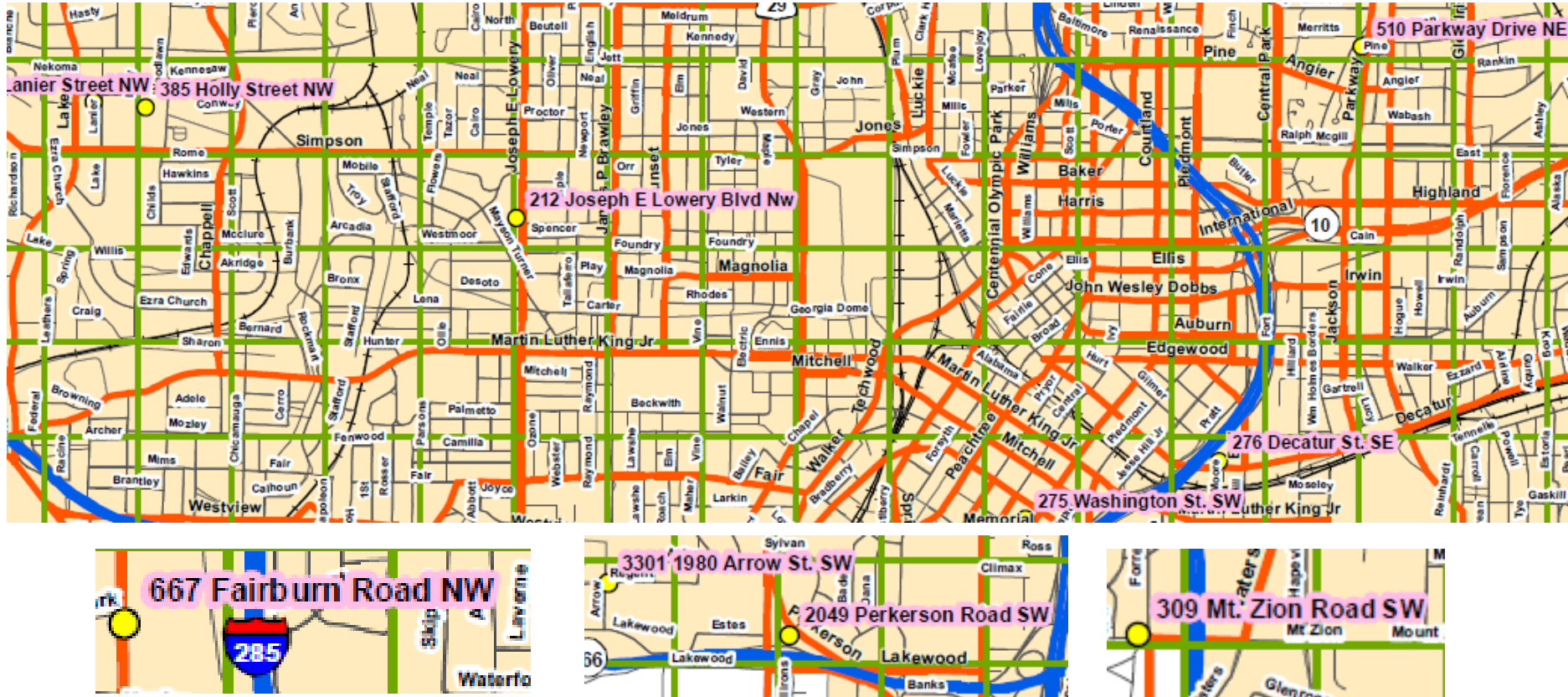
- The US Census classifies the following living arrangements as group quarters:
 - Correctional facilities for adults or juveniles
 - University recognized fraternity or sorority houses
 - Student residence halls and dormitories
 - Group homes that offer behavioral, psychological or social programs
 - Treatment centers offering “live-in” treatment for drug/alcohol abuse, mental illness, behavioral disorders, etc.
 - Nursing homes, skilled nursing facilities, hospice, etc.
 - Military quarters
 - Religious group living quarters (convents, monasteries, etc.)
 - Living quarters for students at schools for people with disabilities
 - Shelters for people experiencing homelessness
 - Workers’ group living quarters, i.e., Jobs Corps centers, migratory farm workers housing, etc.)

- Units in independent or assisted living facility or residential addresses not included in any of the above categories are classified as housing units.

GROUP QUARTERS RESEARCH

- 168 census blocks contained at least one group quarters facility, some blocks contained multiple types of group quarters in the same block
- The City provided address data for roughly 200-300 potential group quarters facilities assembled from various lists
- The consultants screened addresses against the census mapping to identify potential group quarters that may have been omitted by the census
- Group quarters that were not shown on the census mapping were then field checked to determine whether they should have been counted
- **11** potentially omitted group quarters facilities which were clearly not identified in Census mapping
 - These facilities have a current capacity to serve more than 400 residents, indicating a potential GQ undercount of 1.4%
 - Most representatives contacted reported that they were likely to have been at or near capacity in 2010
 - It is possible that some of these facilities are included in the Census count but were not accurately mapped

MAP 5 – GROUP QUARTERS UNDERCOUNT



The Consultants prepared a map and address list which identified 11 potentially omitted group quarters facilities not included in 2010 Census mapping, in accordance with CQR submission procedures.

CQR PROCESS

- Required supporting documentation for a CQR challenge includes both maps and address lists indicating all living quarters in challenged blocks as of April 1, 2010.
 - CQR challenges must be submitted in writing by the highest elected official of the local governmental entity submitting the challenge.
 - Challenge letter and documentation submitted on **January 18, 2013**.
- Once a challenge is received by the US Census it goes through a series of review steps. The review process takes several months before a decision is shared with the local government. These steps are outlined below.
 - Stage 1: Conduct Initial Review of Submitted Challenge Materials
 - Stage 2: Conduct Clerical Review of Challenge Materials
 - Stage 3: Challenge Submission becomes Protected by the Provision of Title 13
 - Stage 4: Research Challenge Documentation
 - **Stage 5: Outcomes of the Research of Census Records and the Challenge Documentation**
 - Stage 6: Research results are prepared for dissemination to the local officials
- Unfortunately, the recent experience of CQR challenges submitted by other communities indicates that the Census Bureau is reluctant to acknowledge coverage errors
 - Review times on challenges based on coverage errors have taken several months
 - Many challenges submitted by larger cities are still pending
 - Among cases already decided, the Census Bureau has only acknowledged a small percentage of locally identified coverage omissions

CQR RESULTS

Summary: CQR Challenge Results – May 2013		
	Number	Percent
Pending	15	7.3%
No Change	42	20.6%
Change	147	72.0 %
Total	204	

Individual City Results			
City	Original Population	Revised Population	Change
Washington DC	601,723	601,767	44
Miami FL	399,457	399,508	51
Austin TX	790,390	790,491	101
Houston, TX	2,099,451	2,100,263	812
Jersey City, NJ	247,597	247,637	40
Newport News, VA	180,719	180,966	247
Monroe, LA	48,483	48,815	332

2010 CQR Challenge Process and Results – Specific Examples of Other Local Government Challenges

City	Type of challenge	# of Units challenged	Population Gain	Field Work Performed	Additional Information requested by Census	Length of Review
Houston, TX	Boundary	523	812	Yes	Yes	8 months
Baltimore, MD	Coverage and geocoding	15,000	Pending	No	No	Submitted in March 2012 – still pending
Newport News, VA	Boundary	300	247		Yes	13 months
Washington, DC	Coverage and geocoding	29,000 (addresses submitted during LUCA)	44 Geocoding errors corrected	Yes	Yes	12 months
Folkston, GA	Coverage – Group Quarters	1 (private prison)	1,646	No		60 days
Monroe, LA	Boundary and Coverage	1,648 (population)	332 (gain from successful boundary challenge)	Yes	Yes	6 months

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Questionable classification of housing vacancy (not coverage errors) is the crux of the discrepancy between Atlanta's 2010 Census counts and prior population estimates
- The field research found many units the Census Bureau identified as vacant that were actually occupied (or re-occupied) by the Summer of 2012
 - It cannot be determined whether these units were in fact vacant in April of 2010 & disputed "vacant" units cannot be challenged regardless
- Pre-2010 population estimates for Atlanta, driven in part by housing unit counts made from County Assessment records, may have been over-stated due to the following:
 - Time lag effects associated with using County assessment data as baseline information for population forecasting has lead to flawed results
 - Multi-family parcels in many cases do not have accurate unit counts attached to assessment records
 - Pre-2010 population estimates probably failed to capture the full effect of the foreclosure crisis
 - Abandoned but not yet demolished housing units in many cases were still counted as viable housing in City and County data
 - (At the same time, some units in "abandoned" housing developments appeared to be occupied in 2012)
 - Some units in new developments which started construction after 2007 may have been counted as completed but in fact were not .

ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (CONTINUED)

- The City's actual 2010 population was probably between the Census count and the most conservative local estimate prepared prior to the census
- To enhance the accuracy of future City population estimates and forecasts based on housing units we recommend the following:
 - Initiate more frequent tracking of abandoned housing pending demolition and verification of completion/occupancy of new units authorized by building permits
 - Periodically re-check the status of units classified as vacant/uninhabitable – particularly in larger multi-family properties
 - Capitalize on the City's new housing conditions database as a tool to update vacancy rate calculations and improve the accuracy of population/housing analysis & forecasting
- The Consultant team suspects that there could be significant accuracy issues with current City address lists
 - Undertake an effort to review the accuracy/completeness of City address lists (including coordination with APS and E-911 database) and consider measures for improving baseline address data
 - The LUCA process, before the decennial census, is best time to work with the US Census staff to ensure a complete and accurate address is used.

SUMMARY FINDINGS

- The City of Atlanta's 2010 Census population count was 100,000 lower than any pre Census estimate-including the US Census 2009 estimate of 540,000+. Major discrepancies between the 2010 Census and earlier population estimates for Atlanta indicate that a potential undercount occurred.
 - However, during the course of research we found accuracy issues related to prior population estimates that were based on locally generated housing unit data (particularly Fulton County Property Assessments).
 - These issues suggest that population estimates made prior to the 2010 Census were inflated – even though a Census undercount still occurred.
 - Much of the Census undercount appears to have been due to factors that are outside the limited scope of the CQR Program and cannot be challenged.
- However, through the CQR process, **3,244 housing units and 11 group quarters facilities with approximately 400 residents** appear to have been omitted from the 2010 Census due to coverage errors and can be challenged.
 - Findings could be important IF upheld – potentially adding 5,000 – 6,000 to the City's population and \$80 million in increased federal funding over the decade.