



COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Inter-Departmental Correspondence
Board of Supervisors



DATE: June 23, 2010
BOARD MEETING DATE: June 29, 2010
SPECIAL NOTICE/HEARING: No
VOTE REQUIRED: Majority

TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors
FROM: Supervisor Rose Jacobs Gibson
SUBJECT: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: 2010 Census Final Report

RECOMMENDATION:

Accept this report on the 2010 Census Final Report

BACKGROUND:

With 75% of households returning their census questionnaires, San Mateo County achieved identical mail participation rates (MPR) in the 2000 and 2010 Censuses. This left San Mateo County 3% above the overall national MPR average (of 72%) in both 2000 and 2010.

As of early May 2010, San Mateo County had achieved the 3rd highest MPR of all California counties. In overall participation, San Mateo County had achieved the 9th highest once calculating early door-to-door enumeration

The County and the U.S. Census Bureau collaborated with local and bay area partners to create a comprehensive outreach plan with a focus on hard-to-count (HTC) communities. Overall, there was an increase of 8% in the 18 hardest-to-count communities in San Mateo County.

DISCUSSION:

I. BEST PRACTICES:

Community Based Organizations (CBO) were successful in their outreach efforts because of their ability to integrate census messaging into the community. In the final San Mateo County Complete Count Committee (CCC) meeting on May 6, 2010, the committee discussed best practices for successful outreach. These strategies included: Silicon Valley Community Foundation grant funding, on-the-ground outreach, pooling resources, identifying correct motivators, and utilizing student messengers.

II. LESSONS LEARNED:

- 1) Change in HTC Communities: The economic climate changed many neighborhoods since the previous decennial census. Many of the neighborhoods that were not considered HTC in 2000, achieved sub par MPRs in 2010. There were also consistent decreases in participation from communities that historically have over-achieved in MPRs.
- 2) Mailing Misclassifications: Because the census aims to count residents where they are living, Census Questionnaires cannot be sent to P.O. Boxes. Areas that receive mail through P.O. Boxes are hand delivered questionnaires by the US Census Bureau's 'Update/Leave' operation. Much of the mid and south coast should have been classified as part of the Update/Leave operation. However, most of these areas were classified under the regular mail distribution. This resulted in approximately 3,000 undelivered Census Questionnaires..

III. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2020:

- 1) Partnership with U.S. Postal Service: Increased partnership between the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Postal Service would help alleviate mailing dilemmas, as experienced in the mid and south coast. Furthermore, the postal service workers could help identify vacant housing units, spread messaging to their constituents, and ensure all housing units receive a questionnaire.
- 2) Question 8 & 9 on Census Questionnaires: Questions 8 and 9 on the Census Questionnaire inquire about race and ethnicity. The form states, "For this census, Hispanic origins are not races." Feedback from the Hispanic/ Latino community reported that many individuals found the phrasing of this question offensive to point that they refused to participate.
- 3) Questionnaire Envelope: The questionnaire envelope stated, "Your Response is Required by Law". This message on the front envelope instilled more fear than encouragement. This sentence should be replaced with a statement about the importance of the census and from the benefits of participation.
- 4) Census Coordinator Position: The County's goal for the census was to achieve a complete and accurate count and to spread messaging to approximately 700,000 residents throughout San Mateo County. With such a large task at hand, it was necessary to have a coordinator position to bring all partners together to collaborate on best practices, discuss concerns and problems from within the community, and network with other partners on how to utilize limited resources.

Acceptance of this memo contributes to the shared vision 2025 outcome of a collaborative community by highlighting the county's engagement with its varied partners that ensured the success of the Census 2010 efforts.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no additional fiscal impact from what the Board of Supervisors approved in September of 2009.