

February 23, 2022

Staff Recommendation Regarding the Washington Adventist University Student Population and the 2020 Census

For the 2010 Census, a population of 243 was reported for the two census blocks that include the Washington Adventist University residence halls.

For 2020, the reported population in those blocks was 40.

Staff have been able to confirm that the two residence halls on campus were closed in spring of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The university administration has informed us that there are 130 students living on campus this semester.

Given the assumption that the missing students resulted in an undercount of residents in those census blocks, staff recommend that the City Council consider adding 90 residents to the population of these blocks for the purposes of redistricting, which combined with the 40 residents originally counted in the 2020 Census would equal the 130 identified by the University.

Staff believe adding this total will balance maintaining consistency with other Census Bureau products with accounting for students that were absent during the 2020 Census but have returned to campus.

The 2020 Decennial Census counted 17,629 Takoma Park residents, and despite concerns that COVID-19 or political interference could have affected the results, actually appears to have been [similarly-accurate](#) to previous Censuses. The [2015-2019 American Community Survey](#)—unaffected by COVID-19, and generally viewed as more accurate than the decennial Census because it uses statistical sampling rather than needing to count every person—estimated 17,672 residents in Takoma Park. And the Census’s [population estimates program](#)—also unaffected by COVID-19, and based on statistical methods—estimated 17,725 Takoma Park residents in 2019, with no population change in the City from 2017 to 2019.

Adding 90 students to the 2020 Census total of 17,629 residents would bring the City’s population to 17,719, in line with other Census estimates of the City’s population; there is nothing to suggest that a substantial number of additional students or residents are “missing” from the 2020 count.

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