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## **Doesn't add up: Pols say Census 2010 numbers shortchanged city**



Photo credit: RJ Mickelson/amNY

Preposterous. Flabbergasted. Inconceivable.

Apoplectic city leaders Thursday scrambled for words to convey their shock after Census numbers seemed to lowball Gotham's population growth since 2000.

The figures show the city grew only 2.1 percent, to 8,175,133. Mayor Michael Bloomberg contended that a 0.1% increase — a mere 1,343 people — of Queens residents and a wee 1.6 percent rise in Brooklynites “doesn’t make any sense.” The city will challenge the findings, though some observers suggested a surge in harder-to-count recent immigrants and mobile, elusive young people could in part explain a possible undercount.

At stake is not only civic pride, but hundreds of millions of dollars in federal and state aid pegged to population.

“Transportation, the school system, public safety – pick something and we get federal dollars for it,” based on population, explained a mayoral aide.

Joe Salvo, NYC’s chief demographer, expressed disbelief that just 166,855 more people were added to the city, when city data showed that 170,000 new housing units had been built since 2000.

The Census Bureau will be accepting challenges starting in June. New York City last appealed its count in 1990.

“It’s just hard to believe there hasn’t been more growth in some of these communities,” said Jonathan Bowles, executive director of the Center for an Urban Future.

New York state already lost two congressional seats because our population failed to keep up with growth in some other states. As a result, a redistricting fight looms in Albany, and a low Gotham head count could conceivably give the Republicans ammo to insist a district be carved out downstate, noted CUNY sociology professor Philip Kasinitz.

New York abounds with the kind of people likely to be undercounted, but if we were shortchanged, “it was not for a lack of maximum effort,” said John Mollenkopf, director of the Center for Urban Research at the CUNY Graduate Center. “This was the best conducted Census ever and a lot of effort was put into outreach.”

The Census Bureau agrees. “The pattern in New York City is like that seen in many other large cities – higher rates of growth in suburbs than in urban cores,” the Bureau said in a statement.

Unacknowledged is that modest growth injured the “pride of place” in an immodest metropolis that likes to be perceived as ever increasingly majestic and magnetic, said John Logan, a Brown University sociology professor. As Chicago winced when it fell from the nation’s second largest city to third, NY is similarly loathe to lose any ground on growth. “Some see the numbers as a sign of how good you are,” said Logan, “but that’s a mistake.”

Mollenkopf agreed.

“New York is in good shape,” he said. “Just because we didn’t meet the numbers that the mayor and the city planning people projected when the economy was strong doesn’t mean we haven’t come through the fiscal downturn much more strongly than anyone ever thought we would.”