



## POPULATION ESTIMATES

Presented by Matt Schroeder

Thursday, April 20, 2017

12:00 – 1:00 PM

**Webinar Summary:** Each year, the Metropolitan Council estimates the population of each city and township in the seven county Twin Cities region. After review and comment by communities, these estimates are used for official state government purposes such as Local Government Aid. Like most organizations that estimate populations for cities and townships, the Council relies on a housing stock model, which uses detailed data on communities' housing units, occupancy rates, and average household sizes to estimate population. This webinar will explain the data inputs and calculations and show how community input can help improve the estimates.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

### 1. Are the small area estimates you mentioned available to the public?

Yes, they are. We publish the estimates for transitway station areas on our [Data Download page](#), and the TAZ estimates on the [Minnesota Geospatial Commons](#). We can also make other estimates available by request if you e-mail us at [Research@metc.state.mn.us](mailto:Research@metc.state.mn.us).

The TAZ estimates on the Geospatial Commons are for 2014. We have more recent results available as well for 2015 and you can email us for those.

### 2. I may have missed this, but when will 2016 city population estimates be made public?

Yes, we hope to mail out the preliminary estimates on or before May 16. At that time, we will also put those on our website. The final estimates, that have been reviewed by communities and certified to the state, will be available on our website on July 15.

### 3. You mentioned an overhaul in the group quarters data in the past year - can you provide a little more background on that?

Sure. We do our best to keep a list of all the group quarters facilities in the region based primarily on looking at the facilities from the 2010 Census and updating as necessary. In the past year, we have gone through that list. We have called out some duplicate facilities – sometimes facilities have a name change and despite our best efforts it's difficult to track to same facilities over time so we've gone through them and attempted to refine that data – both the counts from that data to deal with different kinds of changes in how the data was sent to us. For most communities, those changes would be very small but if you have any questions as you are reviewing them, I'd be happy to answer them.

### 4. In my past correspondence about the estimates, you've indicated that only a certain percentage of permits from the most recent year are counted toward the estimates. Can you say more about that?

This is a frequent question that I get and yes, that is correct. For permits issued in the most recent year, which for this year we are looking at permits from 2010 through 2015. But we recognize that not all units permitted in 2015 will actually have been built and completed and ready for occupancy by April 1, 2016. We are assuming that 95% of single family detached units are completed, 90% for townhomes and duplex units are completed, and 85% for multifamily units are completed. We know projects run into delays for construction or finance reasons. If you know that all units permitted in your community in

2015 were actually ready for occupancy by April 1, 2016, that is a change that we are always happy to make during the comment period.

**5. What is the source of new construction and demolitions?**

The new construction data comes from the building permit data submitted every year to us by communities as part of our residential construction survey. This is the same for other changes, like demolitions. That survey went out several weeks ago and if your community hasn't responded to that survey, I encourage you to do so as soon as you can. That will really help with the estimates for next year.

**6. Could you explain or provide source for more information on economic cycle adjustments for determining household numbers?**

We do that to reconcile the ACS data. For this year's estimates it will come from the 2011-2015 five-year average with the time of the estimate, which is 2016. One way we do that is by looking at occupancy rates in the 2011-2015 ACS for the whole region compared to the occupancy rates for each housing type in the 2015 one year ACS. This is one trend that we can take care of. After we've done that we look at the trend between 2015 (that single year) and 2016. To do that we look at trends in U.S. Postal Service data, we look at Marquette Advisory reports on vacancy rates among large apartment complexes, we look at the current population survey, housing vacancy survey data for the metro as a whole. Again, the second economic cycle adjustment is for the region as a whole. We can get it specific to any particular community but it is something that we do so that the occupancy rates for the region as a whole will look more like the current market.

**7. I understand that estimates are different from forecasts; but does the Council use the estimates to inform their forecasts?**

No. The Council's forecasts are developed independently of estimates and recent growth trends. We use a regional economic model to forecast the regional population. That looks at our economic competitiveness relative to other regions. The more jobs we have, the more people move here from elsewhere (that's on top of natural increase from the fact that more people are being born than are dying), gives us a regional population. We then use a land use and transportation model that accounts for land supply and housing demand to forecast local populations. If you'd like more information on this we have a very detailed [forecasts page](#) on our website. There is also a webinar from last May called the "Comprehensive Plan Kickoff", archived on the [PlanIt page](#) under past events. or our website.

**8. What can local planners do to further help the Metropolitan Council with these estimates?**

I really appreciate the question, thank you for the offer! There are three main opportunities planners have to provide input on the estimates. The first is our annual survey of residential and non-residential construction. That is because getting accurate counts of permits of each type is very important in our estimates process. We recognize that it's not always planners who respond to this survey, though. Sometimes in larger communities, it's whole other departments. The second is the comment period for the estimates, if they're passed down from the city manager or administrator. Examples from past comment period include both revisions to that building permit data to reflect units that were increased, relative to what was in the permit, or not built. Updated information on what has actually been built, is a big thing, as well as a review based on your knowledge of your community of the different data inputs. Finally, there's more irregular but just as important things, like the LUCA program or responding to one-off questions that tap into local knowledge that planners have. Last week, for example, I contacted a couple of planners about double-checking some numbers from our manufactured home parks survey that looked a little odd relative to the trends from previous years. That was really helpful. Those are three things I can think of. One, the building permit survey, if that's part of your responsibilities. Two,

the comment period and then third, anything you can offer from questions. As always, if you have other ideas, please feel free to email me.

**9. How can you reconcile discrepancies in school population forecasting done by schools with other population forecasting?**

I do not work as much on the forecasting side of things, so I am only remotely familiar with how school district forecasts, done by others, work. I know that our forecasters have built school district forecasts from our TAZ forecasts that planners have reviewed and that can be rolled up to school districts. Generally, they come from different data sources and use different assumptions. That is all I can offer at the moment but our contact information is available. If you have further questions about that, you can always email [Research@metc.state.mn.us](mailto:Research@metc.state.mn.us).

Regarding school forecasting, I learned at our last webinar (which was on school districts), that their forecasting is done differently than us. It's done by school districts themselves. They have different methods, with different people involved in the forecasting.

**10. You mentioned starting from the 2010 Census counts for each type of housing, but housing type wasn't asked in the 2010 Census. How is that derived?**

Housing type was indeed not a part of the 2010 Census; after the 2000 Census, that question was shifted to the American Community Survey. Consequently, we had to estimate that. We did that by looking at the percentages of different housing types in the ACS data, and we also added building permits between 2000 and 2009 to the counts from the 2000 Census. The 2010 housing unit estimate was the average of those two. So, the housing types in 2010 are estimates, although they do sum to the official 2010 housing unit count. If these look off to you, we're happy to consider revisions if you submit a comment to that effect.

**11. I understand that the LUCA program will make sure that the Census Bureau knows about units built by early 2018, but what about units constructed after LUCA wraps up?**

The Census Bureau will have a separate process after LUCA to record the addresses of newly permitted units. I believe this will start in April 2019, but the Census Bureau hasn't published a lot of details yet. We'll make sure that communities hear about it, in the same way that we're trying to publicize the LUCA program.

**12. What will you be doing for estimates after the 2020 Census? For example, will you still be using the occupancy rates and average household sizes as described here?**

In 2021, when we would ordinarily be making estimates for April 1, 2020, we won't need to, because the 2020 Census will take the place of estimates. Instead, we'll use that time to assess how our estimates performed relative to the 2020 Census and update our data inputs. So it's too early to say what exactly we'll be doing in the 2020s, but the occupancy rates and average household sizes used in our 2021 and 2022 estimates (developed in 2022 and 2023 respectively) will likely be pretty close to the 2020 Census values, since we'll be a lot closer to the most recent complete count.

**13. Do census categories change from one census to the next? If so, how can the data be interpreted?**

Yes, they sometimes do change. The topics gathered in the 2020 Census will be the same as they were in the 2010 Census - primarily race, sex, age, and homeownership—but there will probably be changes to the questionnaire. Those details are still being worked out. Race and ethnicity are the most likely to change; the Office of Management and Budget is currently considering the Census Bureau's request to make "Hispanic or Latino" a race (instead of an ethnicity) and add a new race category for

“Middle Eastern or North African.” When this happens, we try to make the classification systems as comparable as we can. The housing questions that are most important for our estimate should stay the same, though.

**14. You mentioned U.S. Postal Service data. What kind of information do they have?**

The USPS maintains a list of all addresses in the US, including whether an address is vacant. HUD has an agreement with them so that government and nonprofit researchers can access summaries of residential addresses and vacancies at the census tract level. This helps us track trends in vacancy rates for many communities in the region.

**15. What about migration? How is that handled in the estimates?**

Migration isn't incorporated into our estimates directly. That's because migration data for cities and townships is either unavailable or unreliable for most communities in the region. Migration shows up in our estimates indirectly, however, in a couple ways. First, the effects of migration show up in higher occupancy rates and average household sizes that are part of our estimates. Second, as I mentioned in the webinar, we adjust our average household sizes to reconcile them with the most recent Census Bureau county-level estimates, which do include recent migration trends.

**16. What type of facility is a college dorm or correctional facility? Group quarters or housing units?**

College dormitories and correctional facilities are considered group quarters. This is because they aren't part of the traditional housing market for which we can get occupancy rates and average household sizes, so we survey these buildings every year to find out how many residents they have on April 1.

**17. What about senior living facilities that have a combination of services running from some medical to memory care? Are those all counted as group quarters, or just some units?**

I appreciate the clarification. Senior living facilities can include both housing units and group quarters. Independent living and assisted living units would be classified as multifamily housing units, while memory care units would be classified as group quarters. When we get permit information for these facilities with a continuum of care, we do the best we can to break out the units into the right categories, but if anything looks off to you, please feel free to submit a comment to that effect.

Please send additional questions or comments to [matt.schroeder@metc.state.mn.us](mailto:matt.schroeder@metc.state.mn.us) or to [angela.torres@metc.state.mn.us](mailto:angela.torres@metc.state.mn.us).