

THE COUNT QUESTION RESOLUTION PROGRAM (Or...Where did Green Haven Correctional Facility Go?)

by Lindsay Carille, Planner

In June of 2001 the Department of Planning & Development submitted a challenge to the Census Bureau concerning the Census 2000 population figures for the Town of Beekman and the Town of Milan. The challenge concerned the incorrect placement of 2,203 group quarters population (Green Haven Prison) in the Town of Milan instead of the Town of Beekman. On January 4, 2002 the Census Bureau issued a correction to the original numbers published. The 2,203 group quarters population was taken out of the Town of Milan and added to the Town of Beekman.

Update: As of February 14, 2003, the Census Bureau has also corrected the population and housing counts of the City of Beacon and the Town of Fishkill. The Census has determined that 2,258 group quarters population, 7 non-group quarters population and four housing units are actually in the City of Beacon, instead of the Town of Fishkill. The correction involved Census Tract 6400, which houses the Fishkill Correctional Facilities. This facility has buildings in both municipalities, but the Census has determined that 2,265 people are actually within the City of Beacon boundary line, rather than the Town of Fishkill side.

As of this writing, the Census Bureau will not make corrections to the data concerning the characteristics of this population or the characteristics of the housing inventory. This means racial, income, age and other "characteristic" data will not be corrected. The corrected counts will only be reflected in the population and housing unit total counts, and will be used in making postcensal estimates that will be released beginning in December 2002.

When the Census population numbers first came out one number stood out, the Town of Milan population figure. At a growth of over 140% or 4,559 people, the Town's numbers were the first alert to an error in the Census data. Upon further review, it was discovered that the Town of Beekman, in the blocks where the Green Haven Correctional Facility is located, had zero population. According to officials at Green Haven, this error involves over 2,200 people.

This mix up seems to clearly be a Census geocoding error, one that appears to be prevalent across New York State concerning Group Quarters (prisons, college dormitories, etc...) populations. According to officials across the state, there are widespread errors in where group quarters were located by the Census Bureau. This problem is substantial in nature as it can affect redistricting, state and federal grant funding and local county sales tax payments.

In order to correct these numbers an official challenge must be submitted to the Count Question Resolution (CQR) Program. The Census Bureau will accept requests for review of only three types of corrections: boundary corrections (inaccurate jurisdictional boundaries), geocoding corrections (incorrect placement of living quarters) and coverage corrections (addition or removal of living quarters due to processing errors).

The Dutchess County Department of Planning & Development will be submitting a request for review to the CQR Program concerning the Green Haven Correctional Facility location. Using census tract and block population numbers, backup from the Green Haven facility verifying the prison and staff housing population as of April 1, 2000 and GIS mapping, the Department will be able to present a valid challenge to the original Census numbers. If the Census determines that an error has been made, the corrected numbers will be included on an inventory of corrections issued by the Census, and which can then be used as "official" numbers. Unfortunately, while government entities may use the new official census counts when published, the Bureau will not (as of this date) issue revised numbers for any of their data products or to the base files. This could cause problems for people using Census data, as these corrections will not be reflected in any of the housing or population statistics.