

VCF CENSUS 1990 RP 8/29/90 p.1

Census figures released

Officials say numbers are too low

By SUSANNA HECKMAN
STAFF WRITER

Preliminary census figures for Santa Cruz County are lower than previous estimates, and county and city officials are organizing quickly to meet a 15-day appeal deadline.

Watsonville's preliminary census was 29,764 people. City planner Dicksie Allen said that the state Finance Department figure, which is based on both the number of housing units and school enroll-

ment figures, is 30,882.

Santa Cruz County as a whole showed a population of 217,127 in the preliminary census account, while the state figure was 235,335.

Jack Nelson, a county planner, said the county is sponsoring a "Were You Counted?" campaign to reach residents who weren't.

Allen said that for a city of Watsonville's size, a 1,000-person undercount could make a "considerable" difference. Based on a general estimate that each resident

brings \$380 a year to a local government from state and federal sources, she said, an undercount that size could mean that over the next decade the city would not get \$3.8 million it should have gotten.

Allen said local governments may not challenge the overall census, but if they act within 15 days they can challenge the number of housing units the Census Bureau says they have.

That's important, Allen said, because the Bureau at this point is

saying that Watsonville has 9,693 housing units, while the city's own figures show 10,474. That may mean that census takers couldn't find some residences, especially in the cannery district, she said. Other converted units and doubled-up families in areas like the south Lincoln Street neighborhood may also have been missed, she said.

The city has also been trying to

See CENSUS page 11 ▶

C.F. RP 8/29/90 p.11
CENSUS -1990

▶ From Page 1

correct mistakes the Bureau has made in the city's boundaries, especially in the northern Green Valley Road area, Allen said.

It could turn out that Watsonville's population has been undercounted by even more than 1,000, Allen said, if the number of housing units really has been undercounted by nearly 1,000. If an average of three people live in each unit, she said, the undercount could be in the 3,000 person range.

Allen and four other Planning Department employees are scrutinizing the block-by-block figures for numbers of housing units. Next week, when they have pinpointed some of the blocks where there are discrepancies, Allen said, they will meet with the Complete Count Committee, a citizens' group which was formed to help with the Census, to try to recanvass "hot spots."

County planners told Allen that some areas of the county have larger discrepancies, she said, which shows that the Complete Count Committee made a difference.

"They were directly responsible for getting hundreds of people enumerated," Allen said.

Complicating everything, of course, is the Oct. 17 earthquake. School enrollment figures showed a substantial drop in the months after the earthquake, and the state has estimated that the county's labor force immediately shrunk by more than 2,000 people and had not completely recovered even by June.

School and state officials have speculated that people left the area because a great deal of low-cost housing had been destroyed and because of new immigration laws that allow migrant workers to return to Mexico to visit.

The state Finance Department figures — the ones the census figures are being compared to — do take into account a decrease in the growth of Watsonville's population due to the earthquake.

While the state estimated that Watsonville's population was growing by about 900 people a year in the late 1980s, it grew by only about 600 people in 1989 by that estimate.