



Diane N. Tradd  
Assistant City Manager/Director

Craig Thomas  
Deputy Director

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Eileen M. Donoghue, City Manager *EMD*

**FROM:** Christine McCall, Director of Economic Development

**DATE:** June 16, 2020

**SUBJECT:** 8.7 C. NUON –REQUEST CITY MANAGER WORK WITH APPROPRIATE DEPARTMENT TO ADDRESS THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON LOWELL’S MODERATE 2020 CENSUS RESPONSE AND IMPLEMENT A PLAN TO IMPROVE THE RESPONSE RATE

In 2019 the City organized a Complete Count Committee (CCC) that comprised of engaged residents, local neighborhood and community groups as well as nonprofits and educational organizations, to help the City educate the community and promote the census through locally based, targeted outreach efforts. The trusted voices of the CCC have been invaluable in developing and implementing a 2020 Census awareness campaign to help encourage local self-response.

On March 16, 2020, due to the evolving public health crisis, the Lowell CCC and the Federal Census Bureau were forced to adjust its operations. We ceased all in-person contact outreach efforts, including mobile questionnaire assistance centers. QAC’s are critical to ensuring a complete and accurate count in our historically hard to count census tracts. On March 19, 2020 the Massachusetts self-response rate was 15.2% and as of June 18, 2020, the Lowell self-response rate is 55.1%. Creative efforts were implemented by our Lowell CCC to promote self-response during the stay at home orders. The key message promoted during lockdown for anyone with questions about how COVID-19 will affect the 2020 Census: It has never been easier to respond on your own, whether online, over the phone or by mail—all without having to meet a census taker.

The Lowell CCC conducted the following outreach efforts during the pandemic to encourage self-response:

- Two Citywide Code Red texts and phone messages
- Coordinated with the Lowell School Department to engage in Virtual Census sessions during classroom hours
- Abisi Adult Education Center incorporated, and will continue to incorporate, census education with their students
- Provide census materials at food distribution sites and drop offs

- Monthly phone banking
- ‘Census Tuesdays’ social media campaign with community partners
- Series of radio ads on Mega Radio (popular Spanish radio station)
  - :30 commercials, 2/day (through July)
  - Live mentions, 4 daily (through July)
  - 1 weekly phone interview
  - Website banner exposure and promotion on social media

That said, Lowell has four census tracts that only have a mid-40% self-response rates. This will allow our Lowell CCC to readjust our outreach efforts. We are in the process of implementing the following plan throughout the summer to ensure an accurate count in those specific areas:

- Install lawn signage throughout the HTC census tracts to encourage self-response (signage will be available in English, Spanish, Khmer, & Portuguese)
- Install A-frame signage in key areas throughout the City to promote self-response (signage will be available in English, Spanish, Khmer, & Portuguese)
- The City will send a targeted mailer to every household in the City (mailer will be available in English, Spanish, Khmer, & Portuguese)
- City will mail targeted postcards to the 4 lowest responding tracts (postcards will be in English + language (s) predominant in the census tract)
- Partner with Lowell Senior Center and Pollard Library to revamp physically-distanced mobile QACs (e.g. Census takers at curbside pick-up locations)
- Conduct Census outreach at food distribution sites throughout the City
- Continue engagement with faith-based communities (particularly those serving immigrant populations) through:
  - Virtual prayer services and live streaming, while mentioning census.
  - Banners or buttons on the website.
  - Engage faith leaders for a community day action or weekend (Census Worship Weekend).
  - Putting messaging on the marquee or in bulletins.

The window to self-respond to the 2020 Census has been extended until August 31, 2020. Census Bureau staff will begin visiting homes that have not responded to the 2020 Census to make sure everyone is counted on August 11, 2020.

The Lowell CCC will continue to look for neighborhood and community events to include socially distanced outreach opportunities.