

From the Mayor...

November 5, 2021

At the most recent City Council meeting, we shared 2020 US Census data that was recently made available at data.census.gov. In addition to the final population count, there is significant demographic information that reveals an updated look at the makeup of our city.

While data from our county and comparable cities and towns is also available, in today's column, we will focus specifically on the city of Warsaw as it compares to the last decennial census in 2010.

The first and most important fact is that the City of Warsaw population grew to 15,804 residents. That is a significant increase of 16.7%, accounting for 2,205 new residents. By comparison, the county and state grew 3.6% and 4.4% respectively over the same period. Growth in many similar Hoosier rural cities was far less than that and some communities even showed decline.

The immediate impact of that increase will be two-fold.

First, the city will be required to go through the redistricting process in 2022 to prepare for the 2023 municipal election. As the legislative body of the city, the Common Council is made up of seven members from five districts and two at-large members. The boundaries of those five council districts will be evaluated and most likely have to be redrawn. Municipal redistricting is governed by Indiana Code 36-4-6-4&5 (third class cities) and requires that the new districts have populations that are equal "as near as possible", are contiguous (no split districts), and compact. Candidates for the Common Council election will be required to reside in their respective council districts (IC Code 3-1-8-21), and at-large candidates must reside in the city.

The second benefit of the population growth will be its' impact on revenue for the city. Certain tax funds utilize a per capita (population based) formula for revenue distribution to local units of governments. Examples of this include certain road funds, alcohol tax, and cigarette tax. This could amount to over \$100,000 per year in revenue for the next ten years.

Let's take a little closer look at the demographic changes in the city. Of the total increase in population of 2,205, the largest growth occurred in four groups. The Asian population grew by 588, the Hispanic or Latino population grew by 561, the White population grew by 434 residents, and the African American population grew by 111.

The average age of a resident in our city decreased from 36.5 in 2010 to 31.3 in 2019. And, finally, for whatever it means, in 2010 there were 92.7 males per 100 females, and that has increased to 97 males per 100 females.

The recently released 2020 US Census information supports what we have experienced in the City of Warsaw for the past ten years. Combined with a 22% expansion of our tax base since 2010, a 16% growth in population are clear indicators of the vibrancy of our community. The diversity of our population is also a clear indicator of the opportunity that exists in Warsaw.

The census information, while positive, represents only a snapshot. It is also a younger population. Our community must continue to move forward. Growth requires expansion of essential public services, more housing units, better transportation, and broadening of the private sector to provide more goods and services among other things.

These are challenges I would rather face than trying to revive a community heading the other way. The numbers tell the story.