

THE

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Aurora pursuing partial census recount

By R. Christian Smith
Aurora Beacon-News

The city of Aurora is in the process of submitting for a partial census recount that would look just at new construction, Mayor John Laesch said on Tuesday.

Aurora previously sought a recount after the 2020 decennial census showed the city had a population of around 180,000, down from 197,000 in 2010 — a decline that city officials have disputed, arguing that the city’s population is actually closer to the level found in the 2010 census.

The perceived undercount, city officials have said, is costing the city millions of dollars in lost tax revenue each year.

Last year, the Aurora City Council agreed to pay the U.S. Census Bureau \$1 million for a special census that the city hoped would count additional residents. City officials previously said that the special census would only need to find around 1,000 extra residents to pay for itself.

The census’s self-response period was originally set to begin in early February, with door-to-door counts starting the month

after. But the day before a city-planned kickoff event, officials at the Census Bureau told the city that the special census had been postponed.

Months later, the city was given a new start date in August. Shannon Cameron, Laesch’s chief of staff, said at the time that the new start date could put the city at risk of a further undercount for various reasons, which would mean even less state and federal funding.

So, the city decided in June to further delay the recount, opting to re-enter the queue of cities looking to be recounted that Aurora

was sitting at the top of.

Speaking to the Aurora City Council’s Committee of the Whole at its meeting on Tuesday, Laesch said the city is working to submit, “in the near term, an application for a partial census recount for new construction only.”

The first step is to estimate the cost of that recount, and then that estimate will be brought before the council for approval, which would put the city in line for the new construction recount, he said at the meeting.

Aurora officials have previously claimed that the city loses about

\$4.3 million each year in federal and state funding because of the perceived undercount, which would mean a total of \$43 million lost in the full 10 years between 2020 and 2030. And while Laesch said on Tuesday that the city is still in line for a special census of these undercounted areas, it’s unlikely the city will follow through on it.

“But, we at least want to get in line, and try and recover as much as we possibly can,” he said.

In June, city staff suggested the special census map could be

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A sign on a door on the back of an apartment building on the 800 block of North Lake Street in Aurora includes a warning from the fire marshal about the building being unsafe due to extensive fire damage. A fire on Monday has left the building uninhabitable, officials said. R. CHRISTIAN SMITH/THE BEACON-NEWS

Aurora apartments deemed uninhabitable after fire

Aurora Beacon-News

A six-story apartment building on the 800 block of North Lake Street in Aurora was left uninhabitable following a fire on Monday, according to a news release from the Aurora Fire Department.

Aurora Chief of Staff Shannon Cameron said on Wednesday that only one of the apartment complex’s two buildings was impacted by the fire.

Around 135 residents were affected based on a list the city was given by the building’s property manager, but Cameron noted that the list may not accurately reflect the number of people living in the

building at the time of the fire.

The building’s property management company provided hotel accommodations in Yorkville for residents of the building, Cameron said, noting that residents on the first four floors of the building may be able to move back in next week. The timeline may be longer for the fifth and sixth floors because of the smoke damage from the fire, officials said.

The fire occurred at around 3:47 p.m. Monday at the apartment building on Aurora’s West Side, the news release said. Firefighters arriving at the scene found heavy fire coming from a unit on the fifth floor and smoke spreading to the

sixth floor.

Some residents were already evacuating, and others remained in their apartments under fire-fighters’ direction, the release noted.

The responding crews deployed hose lines using the building’s standpipe system and started searches on the affected floors, per the news release. Additional companies were assigned to do stairwell checks, rapid intervention and ventilation of the upper floors and stairwells, according to the release.

A girl, 15, was treated for smoke inhalation due to the fire and taken to the hospital, the release

said. Two cats were rescued from the apartment where the fire occurred and given oxygen by first responders, officials said.

The fire was ultimately brought under control 13 minutes after the initial call, but the building was deemed uninhabitable because of the smoke, fire and water damage, per the news release.

A total of 41 fire department personnel responded to the fire, and crews remained on the scene for several hours assisting residents in retrieving their belongings and working with the Red Cross, Victim Services and property management to secure the building, according to the release.

Gear up for Fox Valley Marathon

Here’s where roads will be closed Sunday in Geneva and St. Charles

Aurora Beacon-News

As runners are gearing up for the annual Fox Valley Marathon on Sunday, Sept. 21, local police departments are also preparing, with planned road closures in Geneva and St. Charles on the day of the race.

The Fox Valley Marathon’s races include the marathon, half marathon, Fall Final 20 and Fox Valley 5K, according to its website. The course starts in downtown St. Charles, runs through Geneva, Batavia and North Aurora and finishes back in St. Charles.

The event is set to start and end at Mt. St. Mary’s Park, according to a news release from the St. Charles Police Department about the road closures. The race is set to begin at 7 a.m. on Sunday, with runners leaving the park via the Prairie Street Bridge, following routes both south and north on Riverside Avenue. The north-bound marathon route will go on to the Illinois Street Bridge, then south on First Street to Geneva Road. There will also be closures as runners return to St. Charles on the east side of the Fox River.

From 6:46 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on Sunday, the Prairie Street Bridge, just east of First Street to Riverside Avenue in St. Charles, will be closed, as will the southern sidewalk of the Illinois Street Bridge,

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Runners take part in a previous Fox Valley Marathon. This year event is set for Sunday. LINDA GIRARDI/FOR THE BEACON-NEWS



Coach Roderick Whyte huddles with his flag football team at East Aurora High School, which is in its inaugural season of the sport that has exploded at the prep level since being sanctioned in 2024 by the IHSA. SCHOOL DISTRICT 131

Girls flag football takes off at local high schools


Denise Crosby

With conference play now half over and no win yet under their belt, you might expect the coach and members of this East Aurora High School team to be at least a little demoralized.

Not even close.

That’s because this is the first season for Tomcat flag football, and the 19 girls on the roster know they are going up against athletes who have been playing this girls sport – sanctioned in 2024 by the IHSA – for a whole year.

In fact, there wasn’t even a sign-up for an East team until a couple weeks before school started. And Coach Roderick Whyte was not offered the job until around the same time practice started Aug. 11.

But none of this seems to have deterred this determined group of girls, who know they are making history at East Aurora High School. Besides, “each game shows so much improvement,” says Whyte, who has coached plenty of football and other sports in his 25 years as an educator, but never a girls varsity team.

“Last week (against Glenbard South) was our most competitive game,” he says. “Looking at the film and seeing how we played compared to the first game ... they

are definitely showing improvement.”

Senior linebacker Gracie Groner sees those positives as well. But what also brings out that Tomcat pride is how the group has jelled as a team.

“We can’t ever be mad at each other, we are all still learning,” she says, adding that, while there are days “we don’t feel we are performing that well, we all talk to each other ... motivate each other.”

And, Groner adds, Whyte “is the perfect coach” for this first season because “he puts no pressure on us” yet encourages “us to perform at our full potential.”

Monday’s game against cross-town rival West Aurora High

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