

July 21, 2022

To: Citizens' Redistricting Advisory Commission
From: Chuck Livingston
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Bloomington, IN 47401

At the end of this letter, in Figures 1–4, are four maps illustrating possible boundary lines for new Council districts. To be clear, I am not proposing that these maps be considered; I have not evaluated them on the basis of any criteria other than the essential three: *balance*, *contiguity*, and *compactness*. Rather, I want to use these to make three points.

- Software provided by Districtr.org makes it possible to quickly build maps that do a much better job at satisfying the three basic criteria than can be done by hand or with spreadsheets.
- In particular, all four of my examples correct for the failure to achieve compactness in the current map, highlighted in Figure 5. The current map appears to be gerrymandered, having sacrificed the fundamental requirement of compactness. District 4 (purple) is sliced across most of its width by District 6 (red), and District 2 (blue) has a strange boot extending off its southeast corner.
- Given the ease of building maps which satisfy the basic three requirements, it is paramount that the Commission be focused on discussing other criteria and finding ways to review possible maps in terms of those criteria as well as the basic three. Here are a few important ones.

- (1) **Neighborhoods.** In Bloomington, neighborhood associations are fundamental political units. Repeatedly, issues that are first discussed at association meetings are then passed on to a City Council member and then are moved to either the Council for further discussion, or moved to the relevant Commission where the Council member might present the neighborhood concerns. My neighborhood, Elm Heights, is currently split between Districts 4, 5, and 6. Does the Redistricting Commission believe that splitting neighborhood associations between Council districts should be avoided, and if so, how will they achieve that goal?
- (2) **School Districts.** Although many concerns related to schools are considered by the School Board, others go to the City Council. For instance, parents of children in a particular elementary school might be collectively focused on pedestrian and traffic concerns that specifically relate to that school. Will the Redistricting Commission strive to ensure that school districts (for elementary schools, middle schools, or the two high schools) not be subdivided by the new district lines, and if so, how will this be achieved?
- (3) **Historical Districts.** I believe that some of the historical districts in Bloomington came about because of the united efforts of people in the immediate neighborhood. Some of these districts align with neighborhood association

boundaries, but there are differences. Does the Redistricting Commission believe that historical districts should not be subdivided by the new district lines, and if so, how will this be achieved?

- (4) **Communities of Interest, Voting Rates.** I will be interested in hearing what other communities of interest the Redistricting Commission will consider. I am certain that no one will recommend that a commonality of **not voting** should constitute a community of interest. Yet, that is what we have in the current districting.

What do Redistricting Commission members think about having districts for which the most notable characteristic is that community members do not participate in the political process. For instance, the last competitive Council election in District 6 was more than 11 years ago, in the May democratic primary that featured a close race between Steve Volan and Sandi Cole. In that election, fewer than 3 percent of the population voted, a rate that is perhaps a half to a third of the already low voting rates in other districts.

Following that 2011 election, District 6 was represented by Council Member Volan, who had received 151 votes out of a population of about 13,000. That is, Council member Volan was the choice of roughly 1 percent of people in his district. Political competition will be enhanced by building districts where people will want to run for office; people who don't vote, don't run.

In the 2016 presidential contest (Clinton-Trump) the number of votes cast in District 6 was less than half of the count in Districts 4 and 5. See Figure 6.

What does the Commission think about this issue? It has been provided with counts of registered (active and inactive) voters in each precinct. Will that data be considered as the maps are built?

Thank you for considering this letter. Moreover, thank you for taking on this essential but clearly extremely challenging and time consuming task.

Sincerely,

Chuck Livingston
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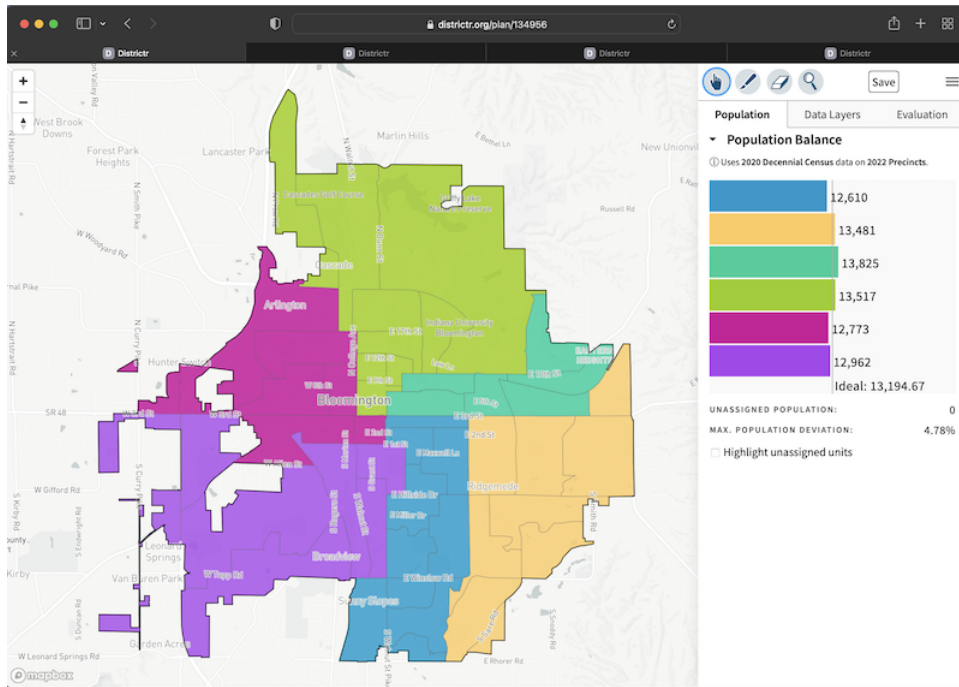


FIGURE 1. Example of a map for redistricting.

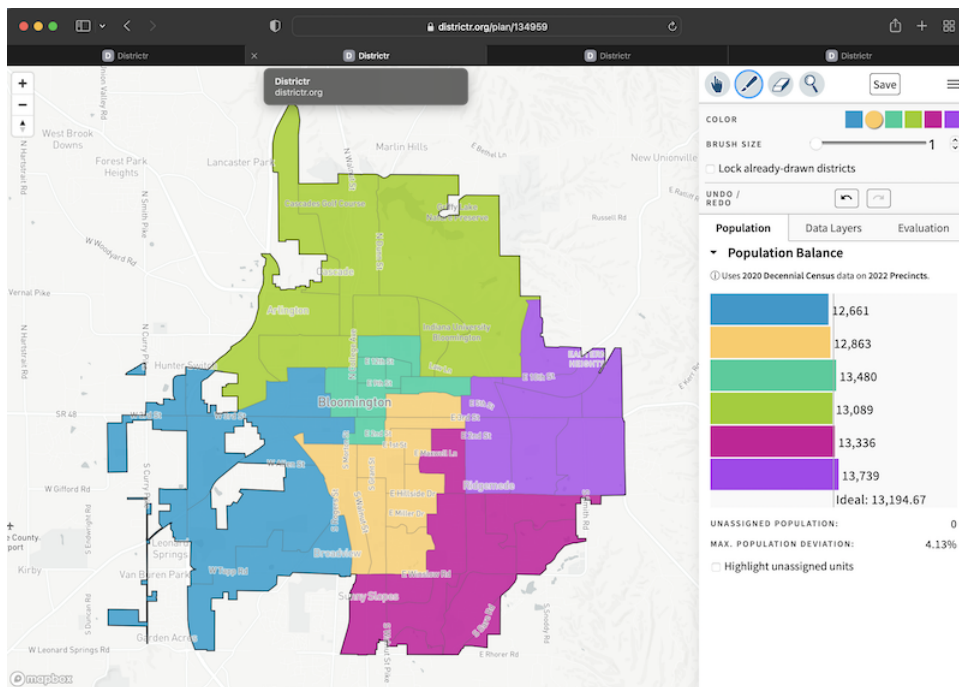


FIGURE 2. Example of a map for redistricting.

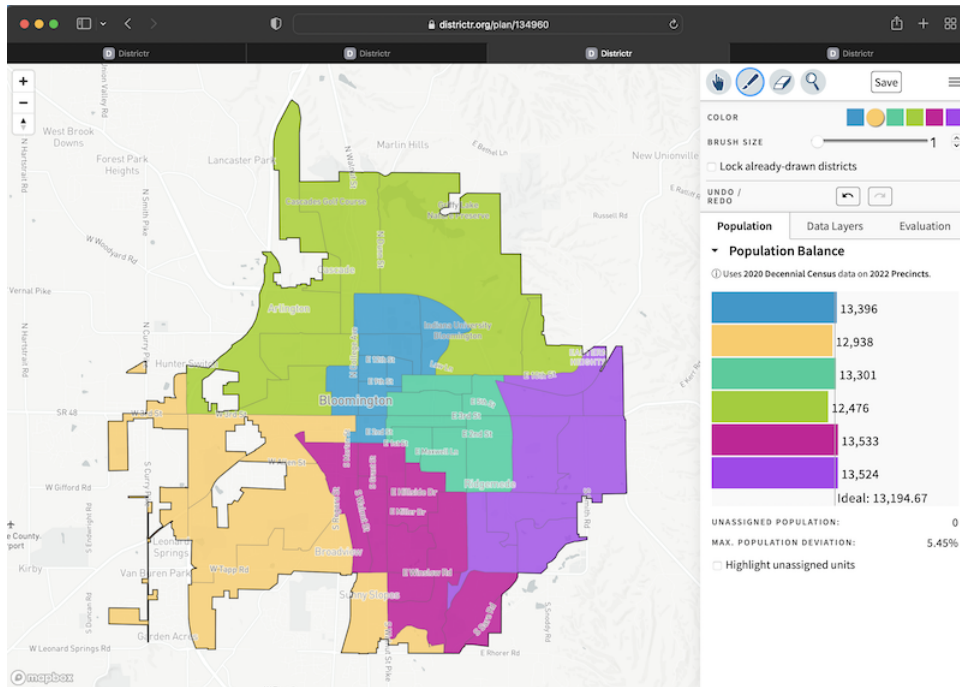


FIGURE 3. Example of a map for redistricting.

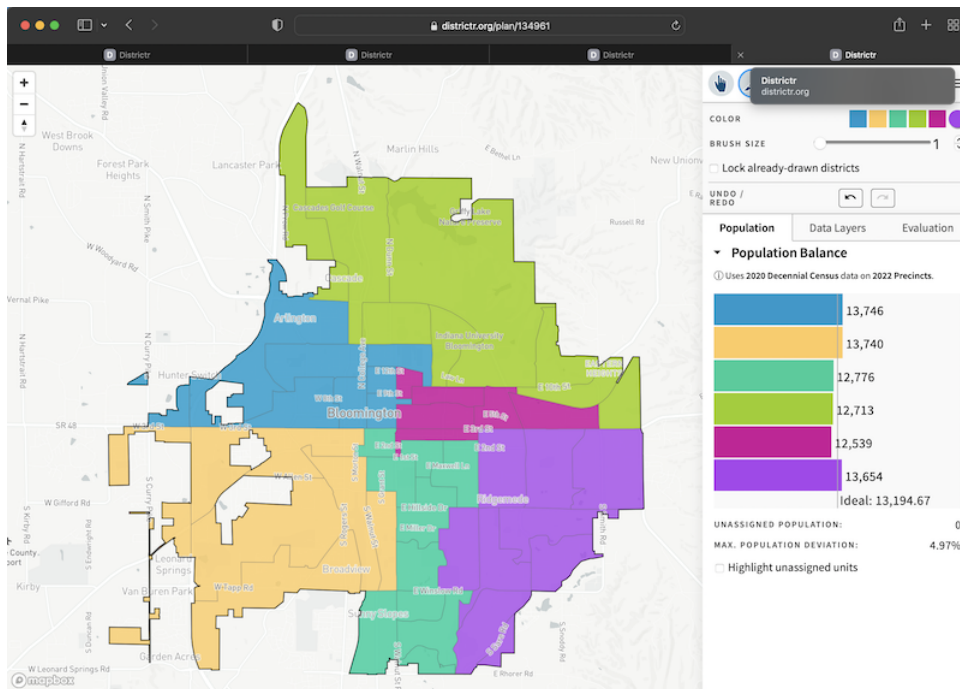


FIGURE 4. Example of a map for redistricting.

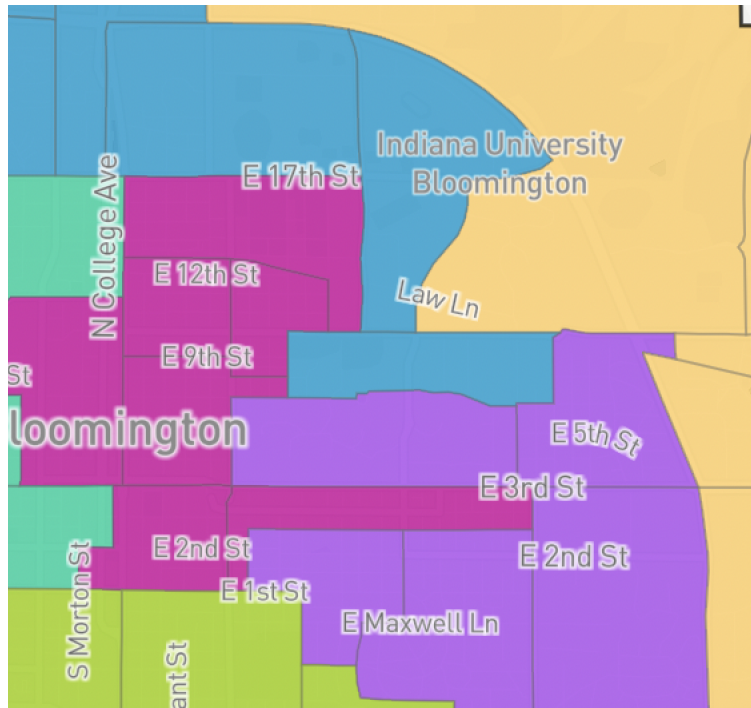


FIGURE 5. Current non-compactness

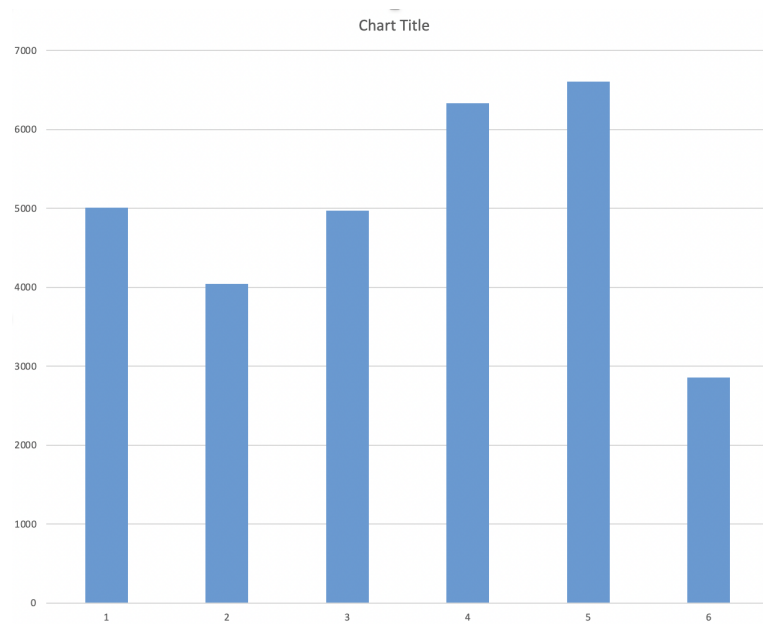


FIGURE 6. Number of votes, November 2016 presidential election