

INITIAL ASSESSMENT  
OF  
FORT BEND COUNTY, TEXAS  
FOR PURPOSES OF REDISTRICTING EVALUATION

Prepared by

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**Should you determine that maps depicting various political boundaries are incorrect, please advise us immediately.**

# TAB 1

## GENERAL OVERVIEW

The Initial Assessment is a narrative analysis of the data contained in the PL94-171 files provided by the Census Bureau, together with an explanation of the impact such data may have upon the County in light of state and federal law.

Following the Supreme Court decision in *Avery v. Midland County*, 390 U.S. 474; 88 S. Ct. 1114, 20 L. Ed. 2d 45 (1968), Texas Commissioners Courts have been required to make a periodic assessment of their political boundaries to determine whether the boundaries retain "one-person-one-vote" balance. This requirement is now carried forward by statutory requirement in Article 42.001 of the Texas Election Code, and has been extended in turn to virtually all political bodies that elect representatives from special member districts, or geographic regions of the political jurisdiction in which the candidates for representative office must reside.

Therefore, following each federal census, each Texas county, city, school district or other political entity electing representative officers from geographic regions of the sub-division should conduct an assessment of existing political boundaries. It should be carefully noted that simple comparisons between the county population of 2000 and 2010, or even a more sophisticated analysis of urban and rural areas of the county might not reflect the true extent of population "change" each County has experienced over the last ten years. "Change" may not directly correlate to "different" or "new" population. For example, existing populations within a county will over time move considerably within the county, rendering existing political boundaries constitutionally questionable over a ten-year span. In small population counties, the movement of a single large family from a rural area to an urban area across political boundaries may have a significant impact on the obligation of that County to redistrict. As a very general rule of thumb, any statistical change of population between the 2000 and 2010 census more than 3%, plus or minus, will indicate a potential need for redistricting in order to retain numerical balance between the governing body's representative districts. Only in rare circumstances will a county experiencing a population change in excess of 3% avoid the need for rather extensive reapportionment of the county Commissioners Court precinct lines. However, any assumption that a population change of less than 3% will not require reapportionment is ill advised. Populations will shift within a county over time. Every county, city, school district or other political entity electing representative officers from geographic regions of the sub-division, even those with a rather insignificant overall population change, should carefully examine actual population demographics relative to their existing political lines to determine the need for reapportionment.

Demographic data is depicted in chart and graphic form for both total population as well as voting age population. While "One-Person-One-Vote" balance between the four Commissioners Court Precincts is based upon the entire county population, the availability of voting age populations is also important in two respects.

State law limits the size of election precincts to not less than 100 registered voters (counties under 100,000 in population may have as few as 50 registered voters, and upon petition by 25 registered voters, counties under 50,000 in population may have fewer than 50 registered voters in an election precinct), and not more than 5,000 registered voters per election precinct. (See §42.006, Texas Election Code, V.A.C.S.).

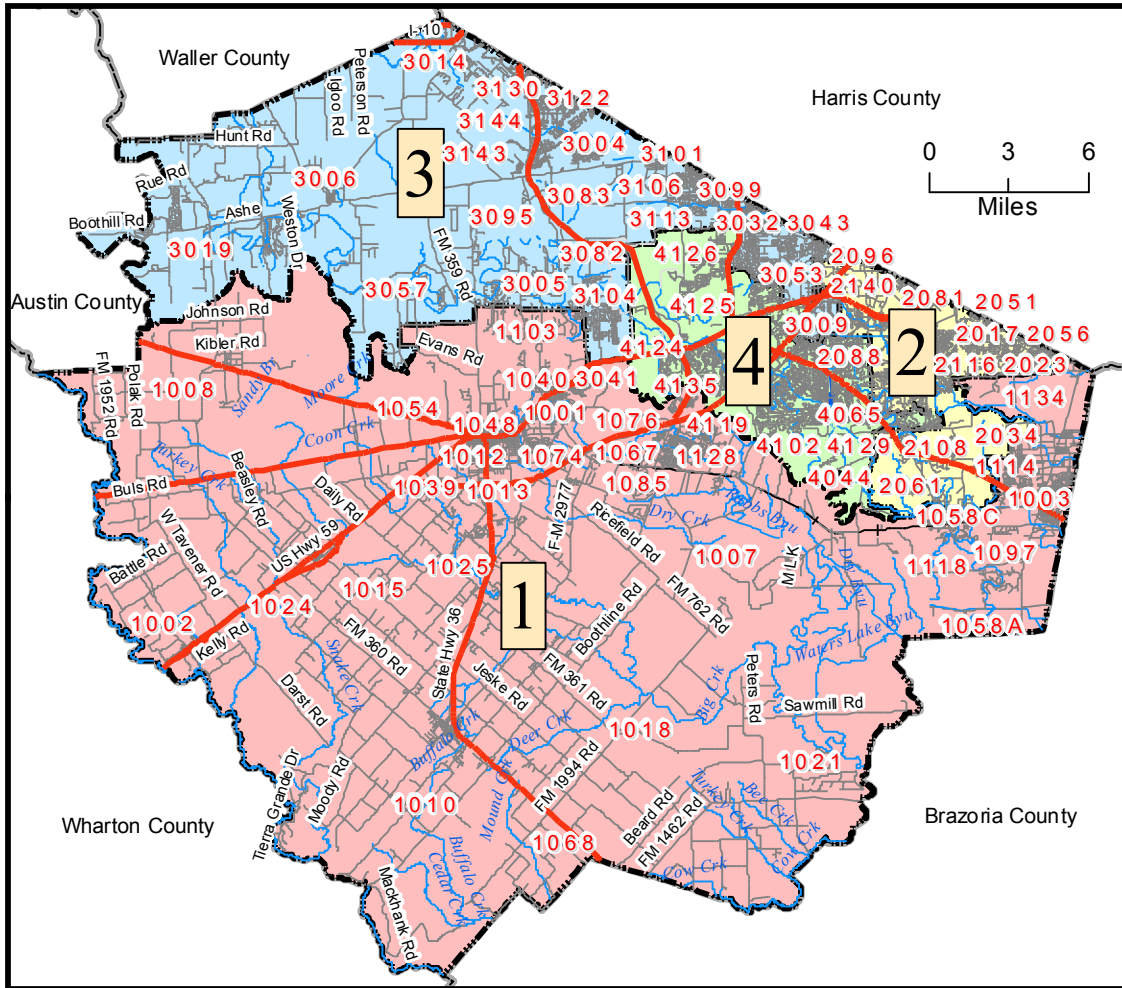
In counties inhabited by a significant minority population, the need to create one or more Commissioners Court Precincts that assure minority representation requires utilization of voting age information. While the actual political boundaries will be based upon total population, the viability of the resulting precinct in terms of the ability to elect requires analysis of voting age population.

Efforts to balance road mileage or to achieve other entirely practical adjustments of county boundaries must be undertaken with great care to avoid unintended shifts of population which will either exceed the required numerical balance, or will offend the Voting Rights Act.

Because changes in Commissioners Court precinct boundaries will require modification of election precincts making up each Commissioners Court precinct, there will also be changes in the Justice of the Peace/Constable precincts as a result of these changes to the election precincts. As a result, all political boundaries in your county, from the Election Precinct, the Justice of the Peace and Commissioners Court Precincts will have to be submitted for review and preclearance.

With this general overview, the following sections of this Initial Assessment will evaluate each layer of Fort Bend County's political boundaries and attempt to determine whether or not the Commissioners Court should undertake reapportionment. Our assessment will point out areas of potential conflict with state and federal law, and will also suggest areas that may be considered for purposes of cost effectiveness and voter/resident convenience.

All computer generated matters contained in this report, including statistical ratios or formulas, are derived from information taken directly from the Public Law 94-171 files of the United States Census Bureau. Neither Allison, Bass and Associates nor the Texas Association of Counties shall be responsible for errors that may occur in the PL94-171 data obtained from the United States Census Bureau.

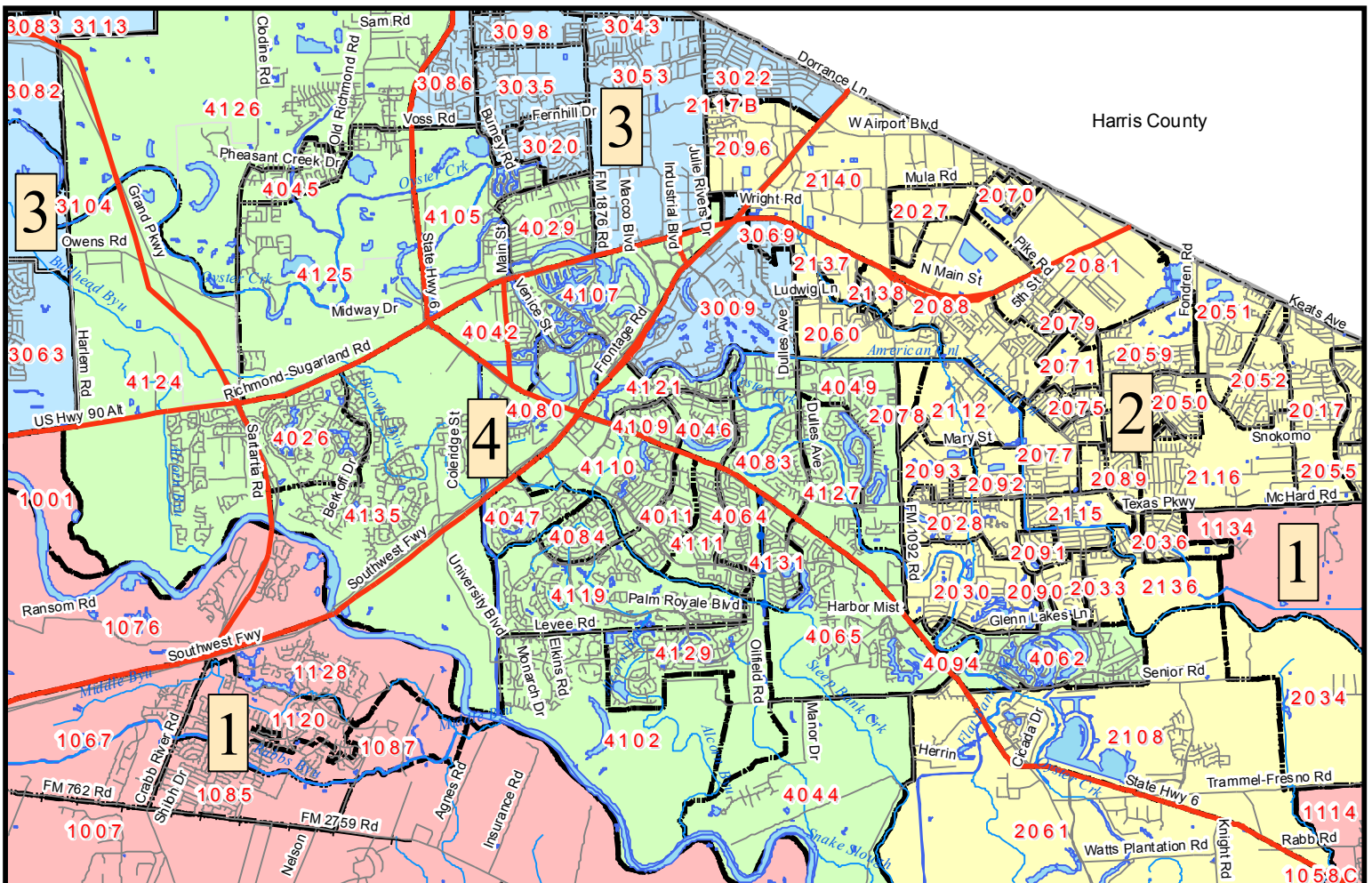
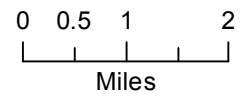


# FORT BEND COUNTY

Existing Plans  
Commissioner Precincts



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## TAB 2

### **INITIAL SUMMARY FINDINGS REGARDING NUMERICAL BALANCE:**

Definitions of the various ratios, formula and procedures utilized in the analysis of county population are provided below. These ratios, formula and procedures have been largely developed in case law in the field of redistricting, together with generally recognized methods of sociological study.

NOTE: The Census Data contains Prison inmate populations, and while this institutionalized population should be included in all gross population numbers used to determine county eligibility for state or federal programs, grants or revenue sharing, there are good reasons to exclude this population from “one-person-one-vote” calculations. Because many institutionalized inmates are detained under felony convictions, or are being held for deportation for violation of immigration laws, these individuals are typically not eligible to vote under Texas law, and are most commonly registered to vote, if at all, in the county of their true residence. As such, large populations of inmates held within the state or federal prison systems, either in state owned and operated facilities, or under public or private contract in county facilities, are not generally counted in the determination of Total Maximum Deviation, or for other “one-person-one-vote” determinations for county redistricting. For purposes of the Initial Assessment, raw data has been acquired from the County and/or the Department of Criminal Justice regarding prison populations. In subsequent census data releases, group housing data may reveal more specific information, but at this time, we are deducting prison populations from county population totals in order to arrive at a true “one-person-one-vote” analysis, and to avoid potential imbalances in population that might result from inclusion of prison population in precinct totals. Smaller facilities holding persons convicted of both felony and misdemeanor offenses, juvenile facilities, or facilities holding individuals pending resolution of pending criminal charges are included within the population counts for the county, as reflected in the census data.

Please review the information contained under Tab 2 carefully. Please pay particular attention to the following:

1. Please consider the Absolute Deviation in terms of population between the Actual Population of each Commissioners Court Precinct and the Ideal Population. Remember that the ideal population of each precinct is exactly one-quarter of the total county population.
2. Next, consider the Relative Deviation, expressed as a percentage, of the Actual Population of each precinct as compared to the Ideal Population of each precinct.
3. Redistricting will be necessary to comply with 'One-Person-One-Vote' standards if the Total Maximum Deviation between the largest precinct and the smallest precinct (in terms of population) exceeds 10%.

4. Therefore, carefully examine the Total Maximum Deviation calculation. If that number is more than 10%, Fort Bend County is legally obligated to make changes in its political boundaries to re-balance the population to more equal terms.
5. If the Total Maximum Deviation exceeds approximately 7%, you may want to consider redistricting in order to re-balance your boundaries, although you are not legally required to do so at this time. However, with only a few percentage points separating Fort Bend County from the 10% maximum standard, you would be prudent to consider redistricting at this time. A suit can be filed at any time the statistical evidence suggests a county's political boundaries are no longer constitutionally balanced.
6. If the Total Maximum Deviation is below 5%, you are generally safe from legal challenge on a "one-person-one-vote" basis for the next few years.

# Fort Bend County, Texas

## Statistical Measures of Population Equality

Not Including Prison Population (County Population 582,514)

Commissioner Precinct	Actual Population	Ideal Population	Absolute Deviation	Relative Deviation
Precinct 1	142,968	145,629	-2,661	-1.83%
Precinct 2	108,415	145,629	-37,214	-25.55%
Precinct 3	213,434	145,629	67,805	46.56%
Precinct 4	117,697	145,629	-27,932	-19.18%
Total Population	582,514			

**Ideal Population** is defined as (total county population divided by 4). Absolute and Relative (%) Deviations are difference in actual and ideal.

**-37,214 to 67,805** **Absolute Range** is the spread in absolute deviation from the smallest precinct to the largest.

**-25.55% to 46.56%** **Relative Range** is the spread in relative deviation (%) from the smallest precinct to the largest.

**33,903** **Absolute Mean Deviation** is the average deviation, which is calculated by adding all the absolute deviations (ignoring "+" and "-" signs) and dividing by 4.

**23.28%** **Relative Mean Deviation** is the average deviation, which is calculated by adding all the relative deviations (ignoring "+" and "-" signs) and dividing by 4.

**20,569.51** **Standard Deviation of Population** is the square root of the sum of the squares of all the absolute deviations divided by 4.

**14.12%** **Standard Deviation of Relative Deviations** is the square root of the sum of the squares of all the relative (%) deviations divided by 4.

**93.12%** **Total Absolute Deviation** is the sum of all relative deviations (ignoring "+" and "-" signs).

**72.11%** **Total Maximum Deviation** is the sum of the relative deviations (%) of the smallest and largest precincts, (ignoring "+" and "-" signs).

# Fort Bend County, Texas

Statistical Measures of Population Equality  
Including Prison Population (County Population 585,375)

Commissioner Precinct	Actual Population	Ideal Population	Absolute Deviation	Relative Deviation
Precinct 1	142,968	146,344	-3,376	-2.31%
Precinct 2	108,415	146,344	-37,929	-25.92%
Precinct 3	213,434	146,344	67,090	45.84%
Precinct 4	120,558	146,344	-25,786	-17.62%
Total Population	585,375			

**Ideal Population** is defined as (total county population divided by 4). Absolute and Relative (%) Deviations are difference in actual and ideal.

**-37,929 to 67,090** **Absolute Range** is the spread in absolute deviation from the smallest precinct to the largest.

**-25.92% to 45.84%** **Relative Range** is the spread in relative deviation (%) from the smallest precinct to the largest.

**33,545.25** **Absolute Mean Deviation** is the average deviation, which is calculated by adding all the absolute deviations (ignoring "+" and "-" signs) and dividing by 4.

**22.92%** **Relative Mean Deviation** is the average deviation, which is calculated by adding all the relative deviations (ignoring "+" and "-" signs) and dividing by 4.

**20,334.69** **Standard Deviation of Population** is the square root of the sum of the squares of all the absolute deviations divided by 4.

**13.90%** **Standard Deviation of Relative Deviations** is the square root of the sum of the squares of all the relative (%) deviations divided by 4.

**91.69%** **Total Absolute Deviation** is the sum of all relative deviations (ignoring "+" and "-" signs).

**71.76%** **Total Maximum Deviation** is the sum of the relative deviations (%) of the smallest and largest precincts, (ignoring "+" and "-" signs).

## Inmate Population Analysis

Prison Name	Anglo	Black	Hispanic	Other	Prison Total	VTD#	Census Block
Vance	493	555	309	9	1,366	4124	481576737001032 481576737001031
Jester III	155	214	116	3	488	4124	481576737001030
Central	319	389	290	9	1,007	4125	481576728001046

## TAB 3

### MINORITY VOTING RIGHTS

We have extracted from the Census data a summary of each major County elective office elected from geographic precincts. These files analyze the population demographics of each precinct based elective office, i.e. the offices of County Commissioner, and Justice of the Peace/Constable precincts. Prior to the 1990 census, previously existing election precinct boundaries were often described by non-physical boundaries, such a survey lines, or “metes and bounds” descriptions of real property. Since the computerized census first implemented in 1990 was based upon topological maps, it was necessary to “approximate” those boundaries that were not defined by a physical boundary such as a road, watercourse, or other physical boundary. These approximations were described as Voter Tabulation Districts, or VTDs. It should be noted that the VTD was only an approximation of the actual voting boundaries, since Public Law 94-171 requires that the VTD utilize census blocks as its component parts.

In 1990, most counties adopted election boundaries based on census blocks, but VTDs are still encountered. The boundaries utilized in this Initial Assessment are derived from the Texas Legislative Council, and have been, to the extent possible, confirmed as accurate by local officials. However, some counties continue to have election precinct boundaries defined in a manner that is incompatible with census block based mapping. Therefore, in some cases, you may find a discrepancy between the actual boundary in use, and the census block based mapping boundaries used in this report. All future election precincts should be based upon census blocks to avoid any discrepancy between the actual boundary in use and the official boundary description maintained by the Texas Legislative Council.

As a general rule, where the total minority percentage exceeds 25% of the total population, there is ample justification to create a commissioners precinct that contains a potential voting majority of minority residents. In concentrations greater than 40%, consideration should be given to creating at least one commissioners precinct with a potential voting majority of minority residents, with the possibility of any "excess population" being used to impact one or more other precincts. Where the total minority concentration exceeds 40%, the issue of "Packing" becomes a consideration, meaning that minority populations cannot be "packed" into a single precinct, but must be allowed to influence as many precincts as the total minority population warrants without efforts to fragment otherwise contiguous concentrations of minority population.

Minority representation must not be diluted, and where possible, a voting majority of minority residents should be created if sufficient minority populations existing within a reasonably compact and contiguous geographic area. In order to achieve the maximum minority representation within the demographic and geographic limitations in existence, it will be necessary to determine which election precincts, and which census blocks within each precinct, contain the highest percentage of minority population and to take such reasonable measures as will insure the highest possible minority voice in county government. To achieve this goal, some attention must be paid to voting age minority



residents. In order to create a viable voting majority of ethnic, race or language minority voters, it is necessary to attain a voting age population within at least one Commissioners Court precinct of approximately 55% or better. In order to accomplish this high number of voting age population, a total population figure in excess of 60% is typically required. This is due to the statistically younger populations in most minority categories, which yield lower numbers of voting age residents, and in historically lower voting age turnout in minority communities of interest.

A determination of whether or not the minority populations in these areas could be joined in a single precinct, or perhaps concentrated in an effort to maximize minority impact upon elections is difficult to assess without a more detailed evaluation of historical voting patterns, racial demographics, and the realities of political boundaries.

When taken with the numerical imbalances that must be addressed, it would appear that if at all possible, minority populations might be concentrated in at least one Commissioners Court precinct to the degree possible to achieve an acceptable potential minority concentration. Typically, the Commissioners Precinct with the largest minority concentration prior to redrawing lines is the best candidate for any alternative plan, but other possible constructions of precinct lines might well result in a favorable racial profile.

Fragmenting minority population concentrations must be avoided. Any modification of political boundaries to accomplish compliance with the requirements of the Voting Rights Act must be carefully considered.

Maps for Hispanic and Black populations are provided in this assessment. Other Non-Anglo Populations, such as Asian, American Indian, Pacific Islander, Other or Multi-racial categories in excess of 3% aggregate will also be mapped.

# Fort Bend County, Texas

Analysis of Population in Commissioner Precincts based on 2010 Census data  
Not Including Prison Population

## Ethnic Background of Total Population

	Anglo	Black	Amer. Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Hawaii/ Pac. Is.	Other	Multi Race	Prec. Total	% of County
Precinct 1	52,410	27,460	247	7,573	53,231	33	224	1,790	142,968	24.54%
Precinct 2	16,485	52,833	189	10,264	26,759	35	269	1,581	108,415	18.61%
Precinct 3	96,077	30,077	492	36,987	45,471	68	524	3,738	213,434	36.64%
Precinct 4	45,741	11,739	230	43,926	12,791	38	324	2,908	117,697	20.21%
County Total	210,713	122,109	1,158	98,750	138,252	174	1,341	10,017	582,514	100.00%
% of County	36.17%	20.96%	0.20%	16.95%	23.73%	0.03%	0.23%	1.72%	100.00%	

## Ethnic Background as a % of Total Population

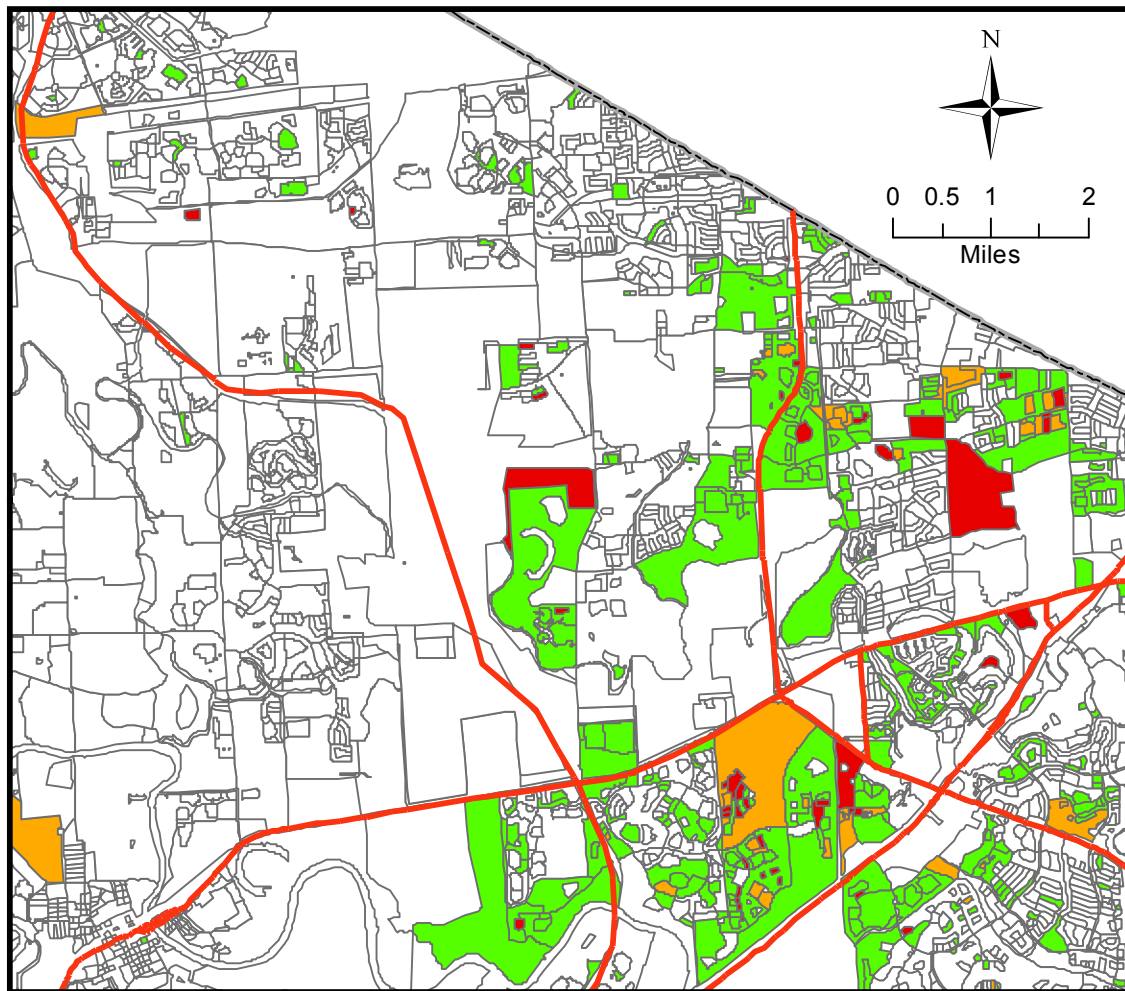
	Anglo	Black	Amer. Ind.	Asian	Hispanic	Haw/Pac	Other	Multi	% Total
Precinct 1	36.66%	19.21%	0.17%	5.30%	37.23%	0.02%	0.16%	1.25%	100.00%
Precinct 2	15.21%	48.73%	0.17%	9.47%	24.68%	0.03%	0.25%	1.46%	100.00%
Precinct 3	45.01%	14.09%	0.23%	17.33%	21.30%	0.03%	0.25%	1.75%	100.00%
Precinct 4	38.86%	9.97%	0.20%	37.32%	10.87%	0.03%	0.28%	2.47%	100.00%

## Ethnic Background of Voting Age Population

	Anglo	Black	Amer. Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Hawaii/ Pac. Is.	Other	Multi Race	Prec. Total	% of County
Precinct 1	39,409	18,348	174	5,531	33,956	20	138	853	98,429	24.08%
Precinct 2	13,888	37,605	137	7,989	17,260	24	157	907	77,967	19.08%
Precinct 3	69,899	19,594	333	25,917	28,776	49	285	1,806	146,659	35.89%
Precinct 4	34,907	8,277	147	31,848	8,610	27	186	1,629	85,631	20.95%
County Total	158,103	83,824	791	71,285	88,602	120	766	5,195	408,686	100.00%
% of County	38.69%	20.51%	0.19%	17.44%	21.68%	0.03%	0.19%	1.27%	100.00%	

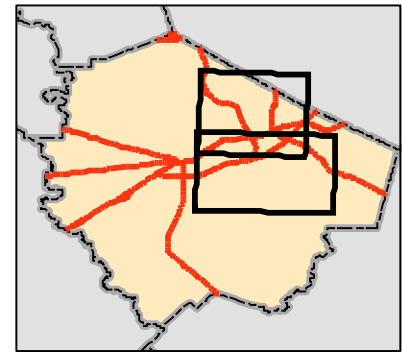
## Ethnic Background as a % of Voting Age Population

	Anglo	Black	Amer. Ind.	Asian	Hispanic	Haw/Pac	Other	Multi	% Total
Precinct 1	40.04%	18.64%	0.18%	5.62%	34.50%	0.02%	0.14%	0.87%	100.00%
Precinct 2	17.81%	48.23%	0.18%	10.25%	22.14%	0.03%	0.20%	1.16%	100.00%
Precinct 3	47.66%	13.36%	0.23%	17.67%	19.62%	0.03%	0.19%	1.23%	100.00%
Precinct 4	40.76%	9.67%	0.17%	37.19%	10.05%	0.03%	0.22%	1.90%	100.00%

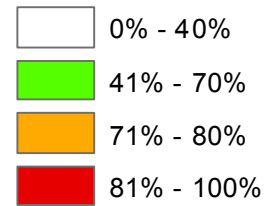


# FORT BEND COUNTY

Asian Population

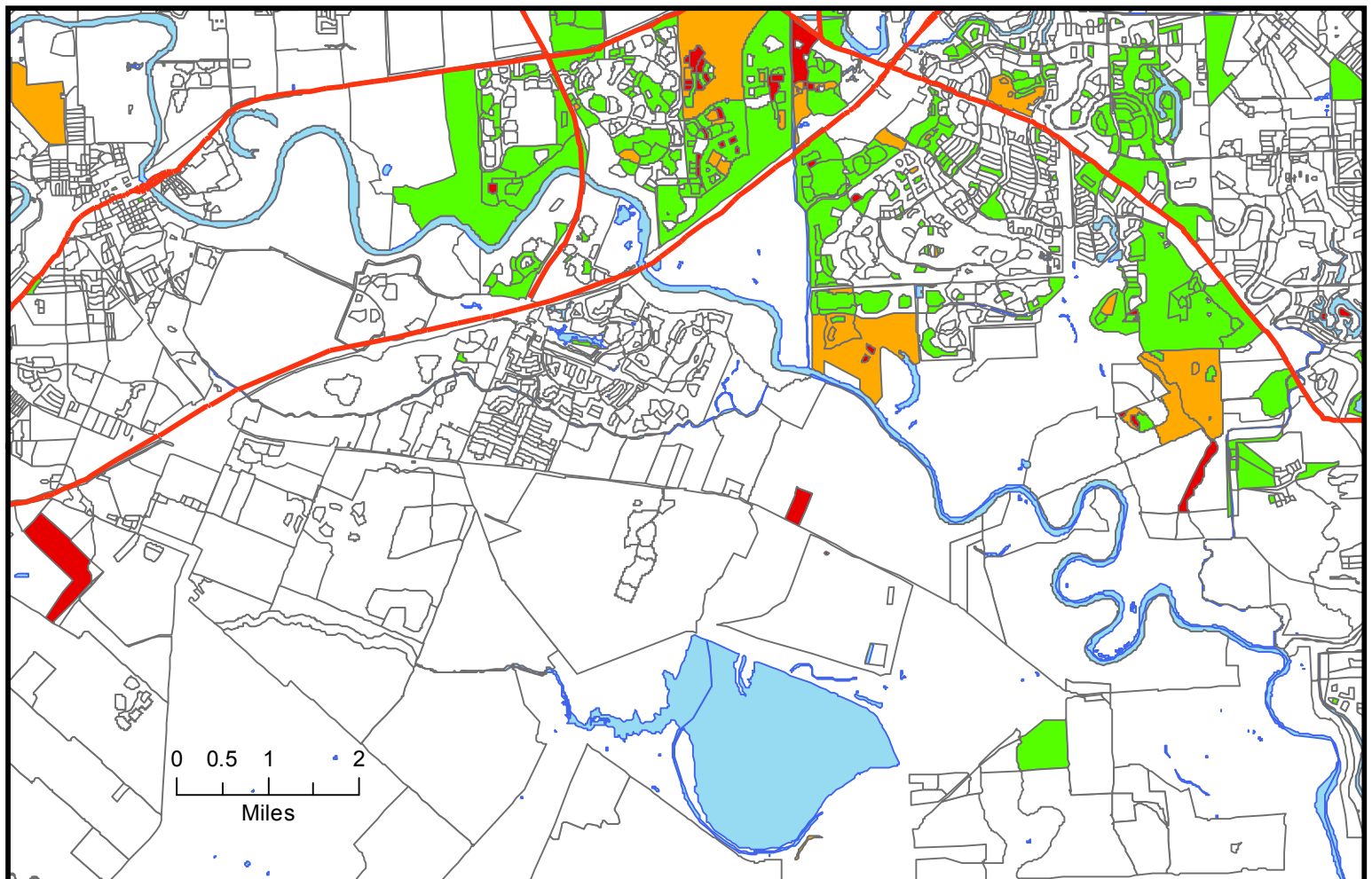


Percentage of Asian Population  
Per Census Block



1 Commissioner Precincts

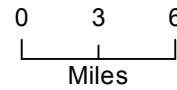
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# FORT BEND COUNTY

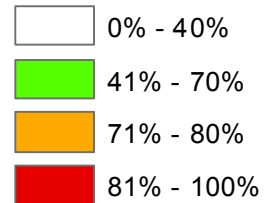
## Black Population

Harris County

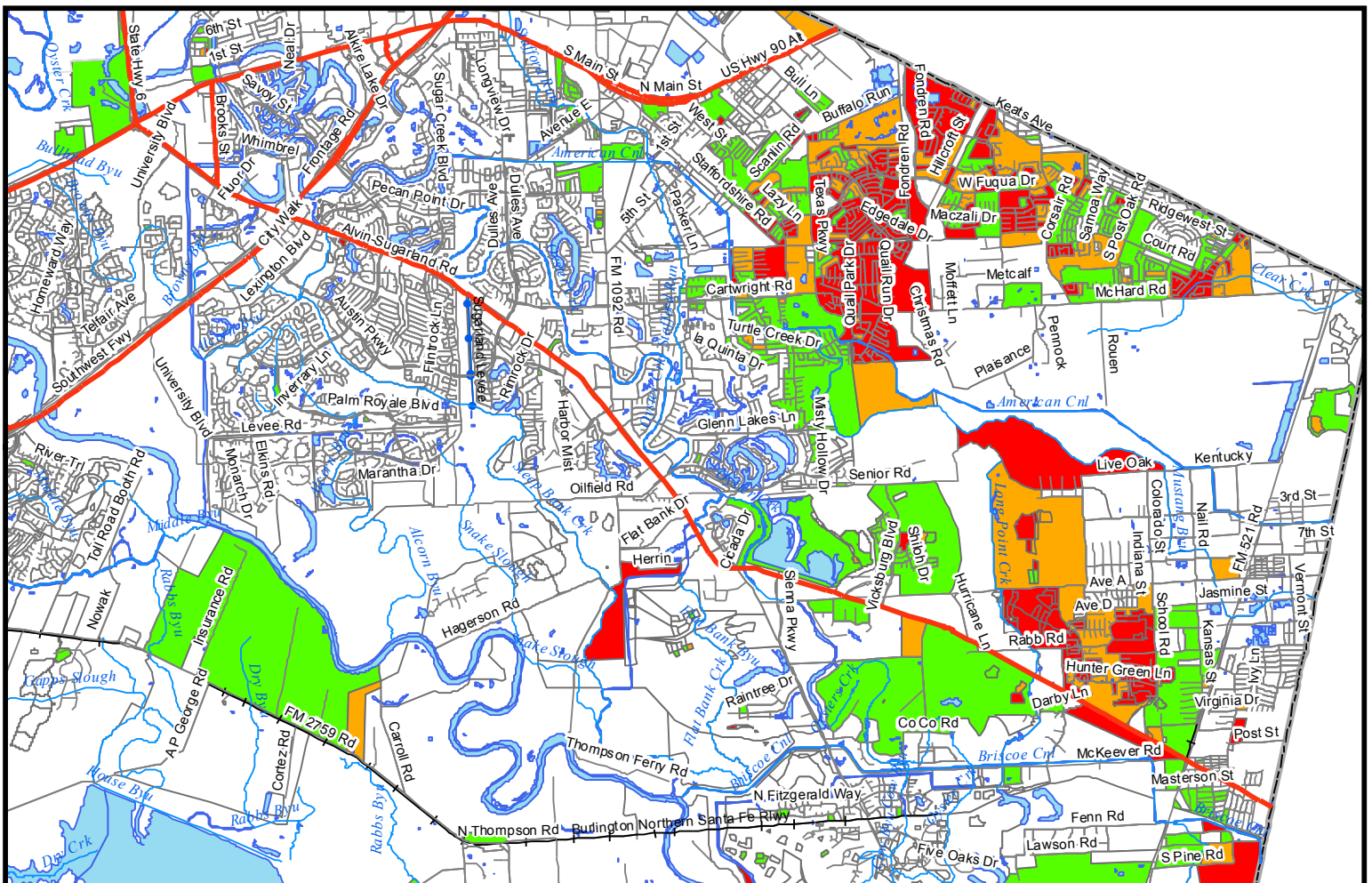
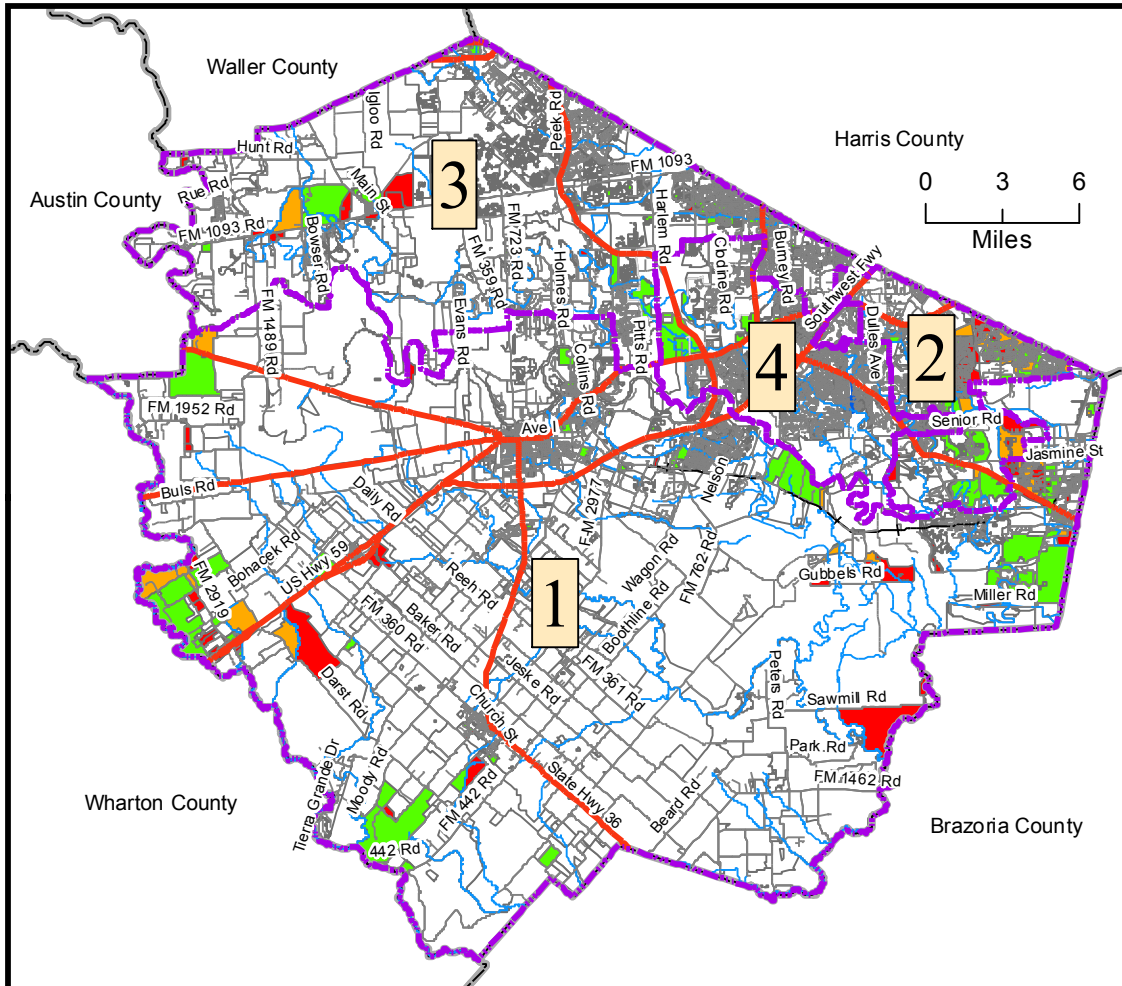
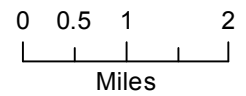


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### Percentage of Black Population Per Census Block



**1** Commissioner Precincts





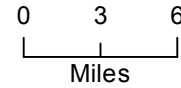
# FORT BEND COUNTY

Hispanic Population

Harris County

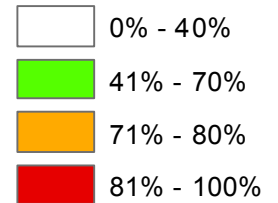
Austin County

Waller County

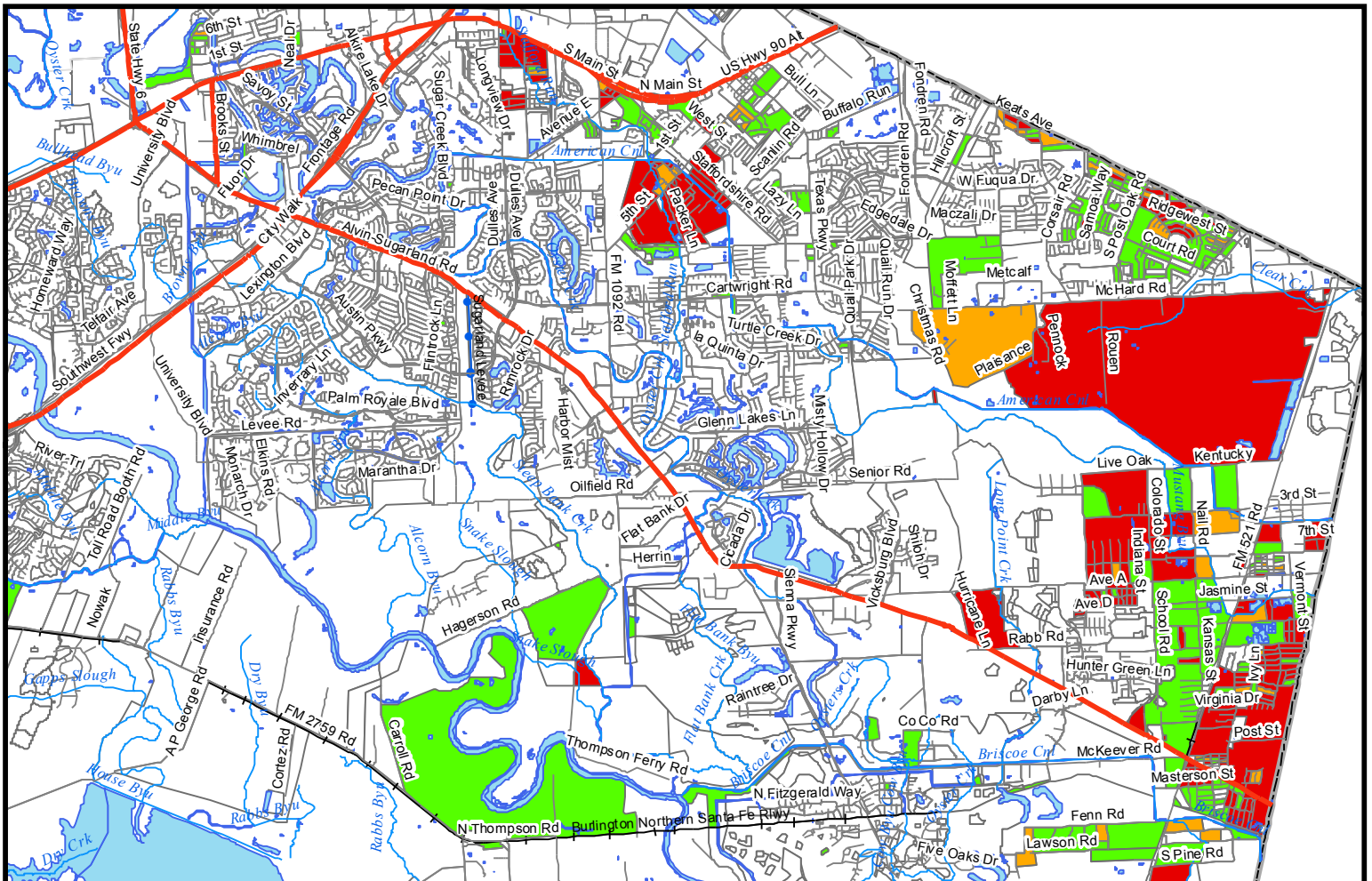
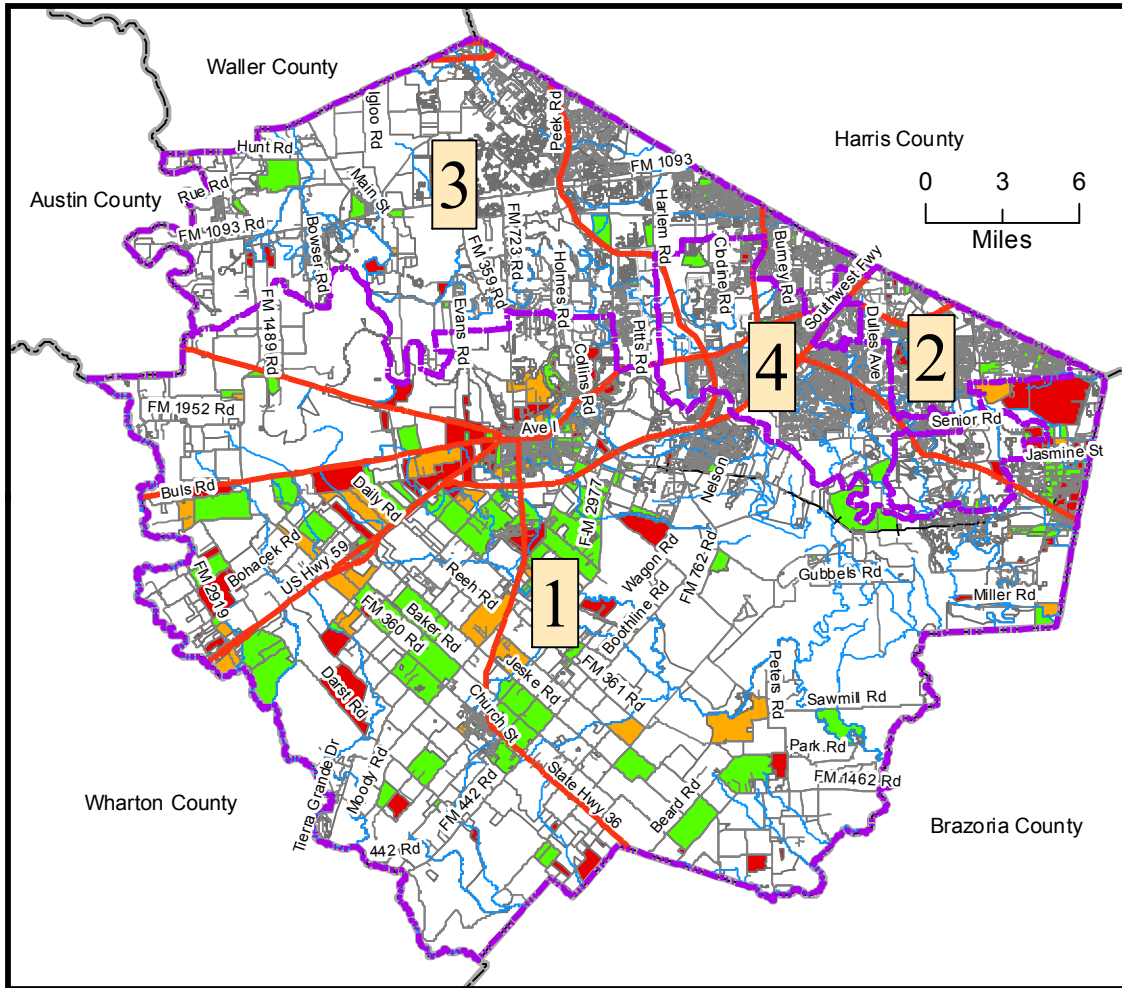
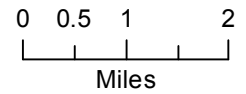


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## Percentage of Hispanic Population Per Census Block



**1** Commissioner Precincts





## TAB 4

### **ASSESSMENT OF JUSTICE OF PEACE AND CONSTABLE PRECINCTS**

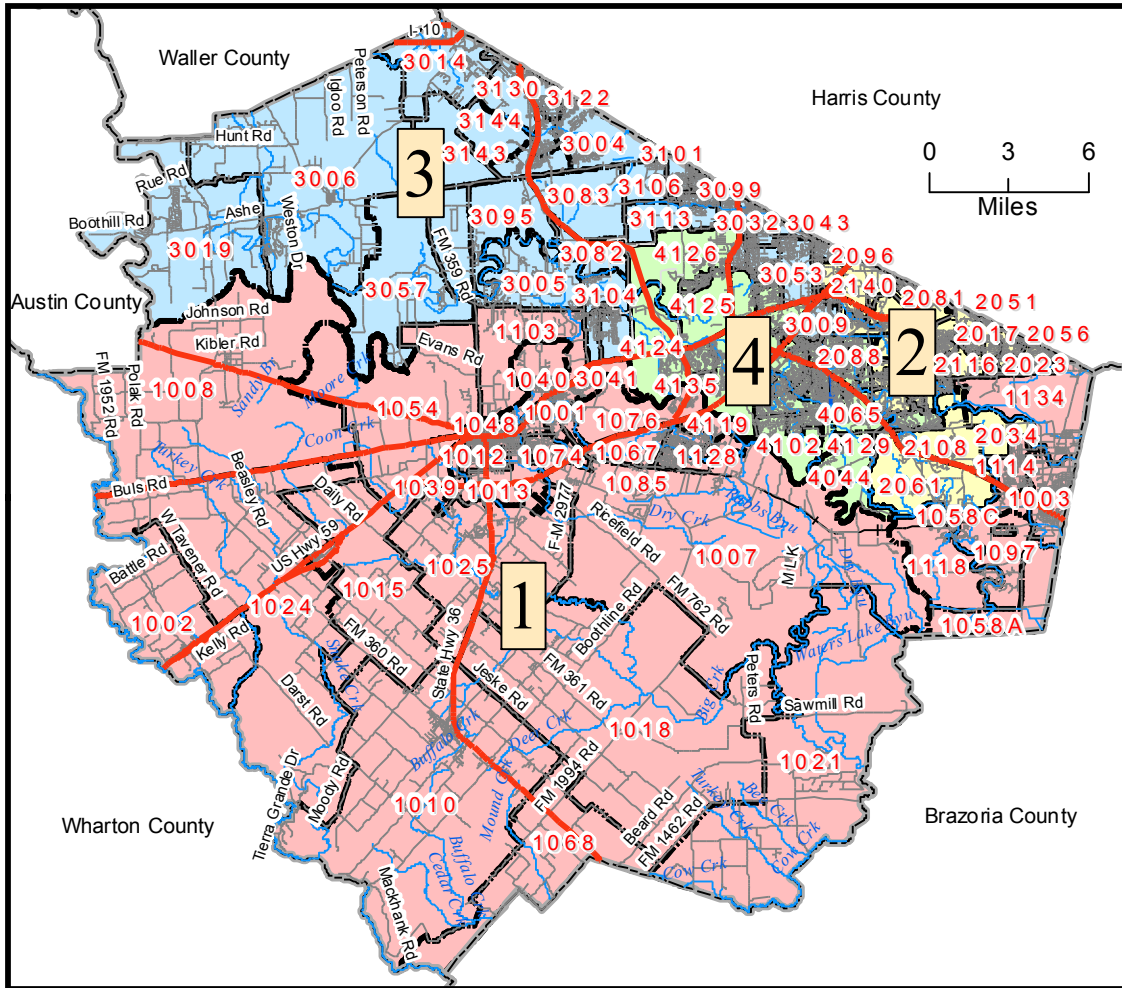
Article 5, Section 18 of the Texas Constitutional provides that each county of the State having a population of 50,000 or more shall be divided into not less than four and not more than eight precincts. Counties having a population of less than 18,000 shall be composed of a single justice/constable precinct, unless the Commissioners Court determines that not more than four such justice/constable precincts are needed. Counties having a population of less than 150,000, but which contain a city having a population of 18,000 or more inhabitants, shall provide for not less than two justices of the peace to service the city(s) having 18,000 or more inhabitants.

In each precinct so created, there shall be elected a Justice of the Peace and a Constable, each of whom shall hold office for four years.

Within the context of these Constitutional provisions, it is recommended that Fort Bend County reconsider the actual need for justice/constable precincts, and consider whether that need suggests change in the present configuration of justice/ constable precincts. Article 292.001 Local Government Code and Article 27.051, Government Code address the location of Justice of the Peace courts. In counties having a population of less than 50,000, the County Commissioners Court may locate the justice courts either in the precinct served that justice court, or may centralize the courts in the County courthouse. In counties having a population greater than 50,000, the justice courts must be physically located in the precinct they serve. Note that counties served by four or more Justice Precincts on November 2, 1999 shall remain divided into not less than four Justice Precincts.

Some Counties may wish to evaluate whether or not there is a need to consider consolidation of existing Justice/Constable Precincts, or possibly an expansion of the number of Justice Courts, whether by the creation of additional precincts, or additional places within existing precincts. This should be done carefully, with a view toward the levels of service provided by existing Justice Courts and Constables, and the ethnic composition of existing or planned justice precincts.

Justice Precincts are not considered to be representative offices, and are therefore not legally required to comply with either "One-Person-One-Vote" balance or "representative" analysis under Section 2 or 5 of the Voting Rights Act. (42 U.S.C. 1973c) Counties are not required, therefore, to make any changes to existing justice or constable precincts by federal law. However, Article 5, Section 18 of the Texas Constitution sets population requirements for the number of justice precincts required. Each County should carefully examine the number of justice precincts required by law to determine if a reduction or expansion of existing justice/constable precincts is feasible. If changes are made to Justice/Constable precincts, either directly or as a result of modification of the election precincts that make up the Justice/Constable precinct, a voting rights submission is required.

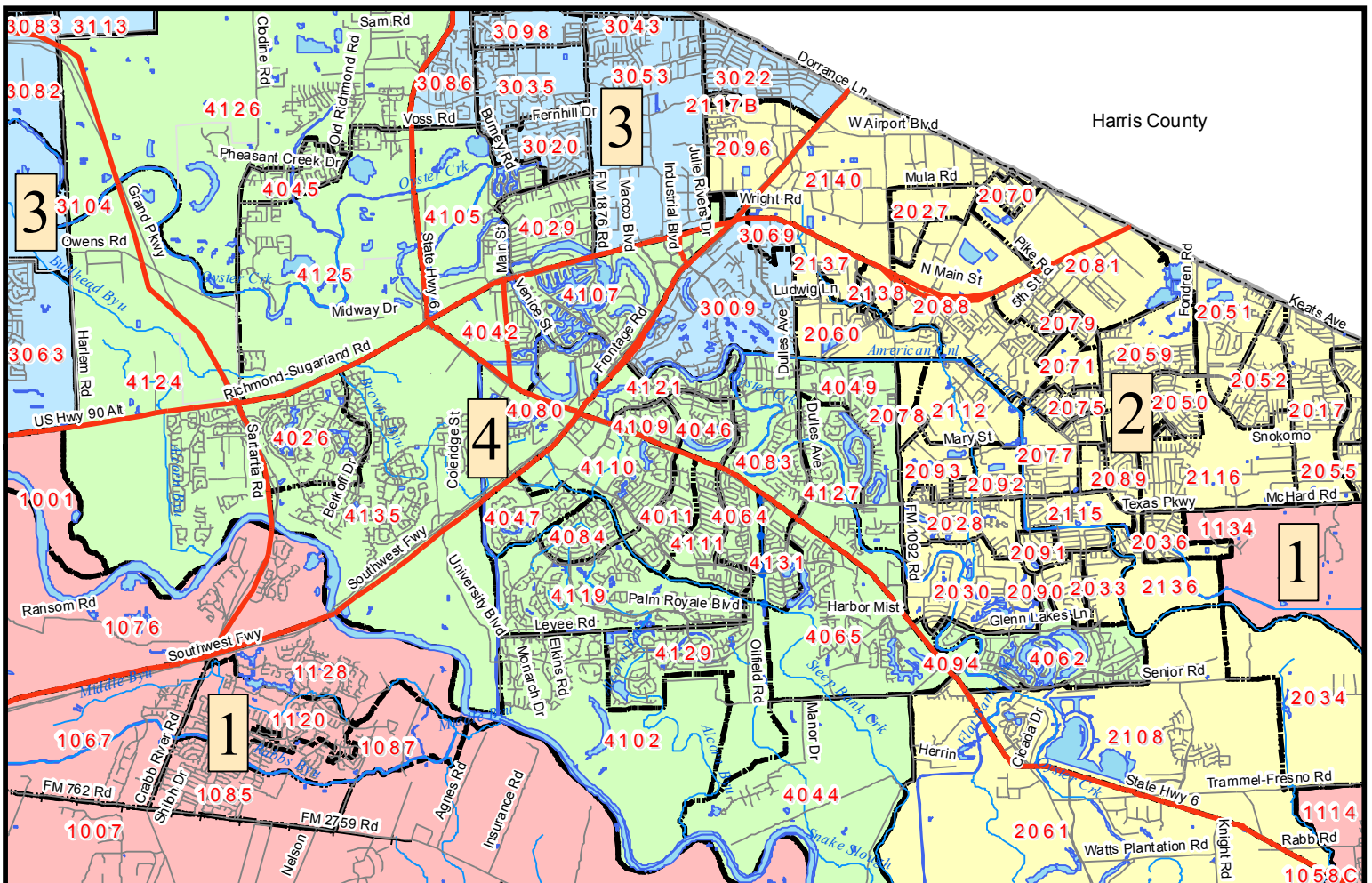
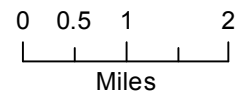
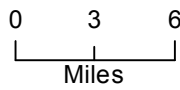


# FORT BEND COUNTY

Existing Plans  
JP Precincts



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## **TAB 5**

### **GENERAL HOUSEKEEPING**

Some attention should be given to "straightening" political boundaries into more uniform shape. In some cases, certain election precincts may be altered to use a more commonly understood or recognized physical boundary in lieu of a poorly identified or recognized boundary. Public Law 94-171, which directed the Census Bureau to develop a uniform mapping and demographic profiling approach for use by small computers, required that all voter tabulation districts (VTDs) follow census block boundaries. In many cases, county voting districts had been previously drawn in a manner that did not follow a census block boundary. This required the State of Texas, acting in conjunction with the State Data Center and the Texas Legislative Council, to move the actual voting district boundary to coincide with a nearby census block boundary for tabulation purposes only. The resulting VTD was no longer "actual," but an approximation referred to as a "pseudo-voting district."

Every reasonable effort has been made to conform the pseudo voting district to actual VTD boundaries. However, due to the nature of the available data base, and the requirements of Public Law 94-171, there may be occasions in which the pseudo voting districts, or the resulting lines between commissioners court precincts, are different from those that actually exist. Again, the use of the pseudo voting district was for tabulation purposes only, and any apparent difference between actual and apparent political lines should be considered as minimal. However, since all later census counts will be undertaken upon the census blocks, there could be a valid argument that a necessity to alter current election district boundaries to match the census block format exists. Under these circumstances, new political lines will be required to avoid conflict with census block lines that do not match current political area definitions. While matching census blocks to actual political lines would not, in and of itself, generally support a decision to reapportion under the circumstances that exist in Fort Bend County, there is a justifiable combination of factors that would support a reapportionment decision. These factors would include:

1. Redrawing election precincts to increase voter convenience.
2. Consolidation of election precincts where practicable.
3. Resizing election precincts to achieve greater efficiency.
4. Harmonizing actual political lines with pseudo voting districts based upon census blocks.
5. Redrawing all lines to achieve "one-person-one-vote" deviations of the smallest possible percentage.

## **ASSESSMENT OF ELECTION PRECINCTS**

Election Precincts are the building blocks for all other political boundaries. Any change in the “representative” offices of the Commissioners Court will result in changes to the underlying Election Precincts, which in turn will work change in the boundaries of the Justice Precinct made up by the underlying election Precinct.

So, if changes are required in your Commissioners Court Precincts, there will be resulting change in all other election boundaries in your county. According to Article 42.006, Texas Election Code, V.A.C.S., each election precinct must contain no fewer than 100 registered voters and not more than 5000 registered voters. (Exceptions apply depending upon county population). For the Initial Assessment, no attempt has been made to acquire actual registered voter information. In this preliminary assessment, a formulaic approach will be used. For purposes of the Initial Assessment, we make some assumptions that allow us to estimate the highest probable number of registered voters that might reside within an election precinct. Using the voting age population demographic information contained in Appendix B, we assume that the percentage of actual registered voters would never exceed 70% of the total "eligible" voters over the age of 18 years. This assumption will generally hold true, but in some isolated cases, the actual number of registered voters may exceed 70% of total eligible voters.

Therefore, as a general rule of thumb, Counties that cast more than 5000 ballots in a single election court precinct should consider breaking that precinct up into smaller units to facilitate easier administration of such large turnouts. Smaller numbers of voters likewise might be a basis for consolidating smaller election precincts and to achieve greater efficiency and lower costs in holding elections.

Reducing the number of election precincts, where appropriate, lowers the overall costs of elections, but this reduction must be coupled with other factors, such as automated vote counting, in order to insure that election returns can be quickly and accurately tabulated in the resulting larger election precincts. With automated vote counting systems, smaller polling place staff can accommodate larger numbers of voters, and achieve overall reductions in the costs of elections.

## **CONSOLIDATION FACTORS**

A limiting factor in wholesale consolidation of county election precincts will be the restraints imposed by Art. 42.005, Texas Election Code, V.A.C.S., which restricts county election precincts to that territory which does not contain more than one commissioners precinct, justice precinct, congressional district, state representative district, state senatorial district, ward of a city with a population of 10,000 or more, or a State Board of Education District.

We are not presently informed as to the nature of the city governments within Fort Bend County. Should any of these cities exceed 10,000 residents, or should any city utilize

single member election precincts for its city council positions, these city "wards" must be considered in the construction of county election precincts. In any plan for county election precincts within a city having single member election districts, city ward lines must be followed to prevent a violation of state law. Therefore, all cities within the county should be encouraged to participate and cooperate in the reapportionment process.

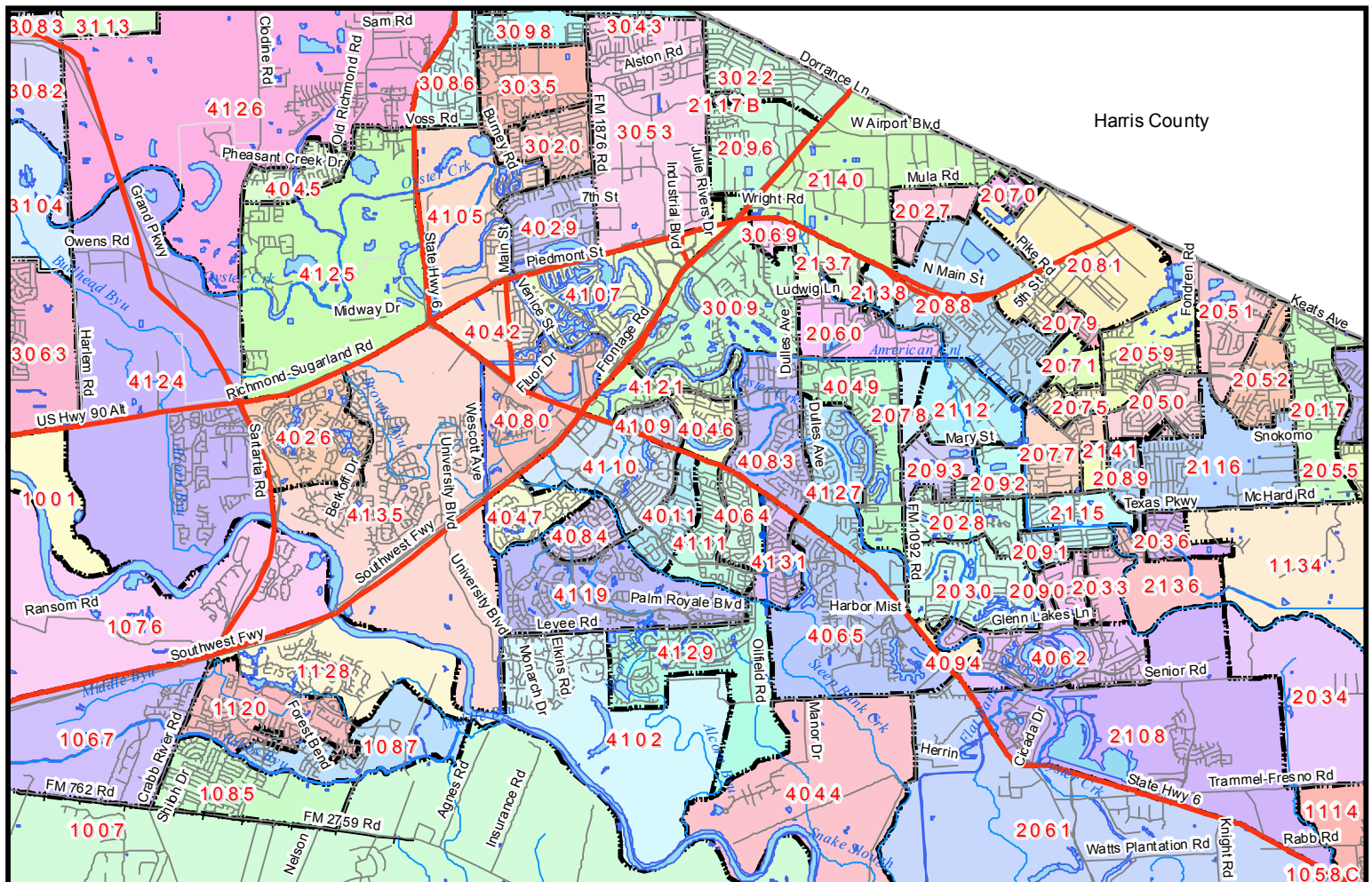
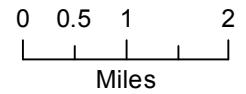
Although state law does not require the county election precincts to conform to independent school district election precincts, it only makes prudent sense to consult with any independent school district in your jurisdiction to determine if school board members are elected from single member districts. We are not presently aware of the nature of school district configurations within Fort Bend County. If, however, any single member districts are utilized, and if the school board would wish to participate in the county reapportionment process with the County by agreeing to utilize single member districts that are compatible with proposed county election precincts, then a three way agreement between the County, cities of more than 10,000 in population or in smaller towns or cities having single member election wards, and independent school districts electing board members from districts could result in considerably less confusing and more economical elections for all three entities.

Counties are required, where significant minority populations exist within an election precinct, to provide election workers able to speak the significant minority population language. The difficulty of finding bi-lingual poll workers in adequate numbers is a challenge, but the Department of Justice will examine your efforts to identify such election precincts, and to recruit and retain qualified bi-lingual poll workers.



## Existing Plans

### Voting Districts



## **CONCLUSION**

While the primary task of reapportionment will concentrate on the issue of numerical balance and minority representation in the formation of commissioners' court precincts, other valuable improvements could also be achieved in the political well being of Fort Bend County by redrawing existing lines. The method and manner by which these less direct goals are accomplished is a responsibility imposed upon the Commissioners Court beyond those expressly required by the Voting Rights Act or the Constitution, but which may have just as much value to the general public. Cost efficiency and voter convenience in elections that might be achieved by a serious evaluation of election precincts, and the elimination of unnecessary confusion by cooperation with other governmental entities are only two of the benefits that might be achieved by reapportionment beyond the legal duties required by law.

Another issue that should be considered is the actual need for Justice of the Peace/Constable Precincts. While local demand for Justice/Constable services may well justify the current number of justice courts, the cost of maintenance and administration of these particular governmental offices should be carefully evaluated.

Finally, the county should consider a wholesale renumbering of its election precincts in order to simplify future elections. Consolidation should be considered where possible, subject to limitations imposed by state law and were possible by agreement with any Independent School Districts or municipalities larger than 10,000 in population within in the County.

Redistricting should be viewed as an opportunity for streamlining county organization, and a chance to address as many issues as possible to achieve greater participation and involvement in county government. This is the time to plan for future growth, anticipate costs of government operations, and to involve the public in the process of county government. We look forward to working with you in this exacting but rewarding process.