



Joshua Sweeney  
Mayor

Don Caskey  
Mayor Pro Tempore

Jared Mathis  
Council Member

Erica Pezold  
Council Member

Dave Wheeler  
Council Member

## City of Laguna Hills City Council

Special Meeting Agenda  
Tuesday, October 7, 2025 - 6:00 PM

City Council Chamber  
24035 El Toro Road  
Laguna Hills, CA 92653

**In Person Public Comments:** Any person wishing to address the City Council only on items listed on this Agenda, is asked to complete a pink “Request to Speak” form available on the table at the back of the Chamber and submit the form to the City Clerk. The Request to Speak form assists the Mayor in ensuring that all persons wishing to address the City Council are recognized and ensures accurate identification of meeting participants in the City Council Minutes. Completion of the form is voluntary. It is City policy to limit public testimony to up to three minutes per person, as determined by the Mayor, and a total time limit of thirty minutes for Public Comments.

**Submission of Electronic Public Comments:** Those wishing to make electronic public comments may submit their comments by [email to the City Clerk](#) no later than 2 hours prior to the meeting on Tuesday, October 7, 2025. In the subject line of the email, please state your name and the item number you are commenting on. All comments received by the deadline on the date of the meeting will be provided to the City Council and will be provided for public inspection at the meeting. During the applicable agenda item, the City Clerk will announce the name of the sender and subject matter of all electronic comments received by the deadline on Tuesday, October 7, 2025. Email comments will NOT be read by the City Clerk during the meeting. Electronic public comments may only be submitted via email and comments via text and social media (Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), etc.) will not be accepted.

For questions or assistance, please contact the City Clerk’s Office at (949) 707-2635 or via [email](#).

## Call to Order

Resolution No. 96-04-09-1 established rules of decorum for public meetings held by the City of Laguna Hills. Resolution No. 96-04-09-1 is available on the table at the back of the City Council Chamber.

## Roll Call of City Council Members

## Public Comments

Members of the public may address the City Council only on items listed on this Agenda. Public Comments are limited to three minutes per person, as determined by the Mayor, and a total time limit of thirty minutes.

## City Council Public Hearing Item

### 1 First Public Hearing to Consider Composition of Districts for Commencing the Process to Transition to By-District Elections

**Recommendation:** That the City Council: 1. Receive and file introduction to districting presentation prepared by the City's retained expert demographer National Demographics Corporation; and 2. Conduct the First Public Hearing necessary for commencing the process to transition to by-district elections, review and consider input regarding the composition of districts from interested members of the public, and provide further direction to City staff.

## Adjournment

The next Regular Meeting of the City Council/Planning Agency will be October 14, 2025, at 6:00p.m., in the City Council Chamber, located at 24035 El Toro Road, Laguna Hills, California.

## CERTIFICATION

I, JENNIFER LEE, City Clerk of the City of Laguna Hills, do hereby certify that a copy of the foregoing Agenda was posted at Laguna Hills City Hall, Laguna Hills Community Center, and the Courtyard at La Paz Center by October 6, 2025, at 5:00p.m.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
*Jennifer Lee, CMC, City Clerk*

It is the intention of the City of Laguna Hills to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act in all respects. If as an attendee or a participant at this meeting you will need special assistance beyond what is normally provided, the City of Laguna Hills will attempt to accommodate you in every reasonable manner. Please contact the office of the City Clerk at (949) 707-2635. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to assure accessibility to this meeting.

Materials related to an item on this Agenda submitted to the City Council after distribution of the agenda packet are available for public inspection in the City Clerk's Office at 24035 El Toro Road, Laguna Hills, California, during normal business hours. In addition, such writings or documents will be made available for public review on the City's website at: <https://www.lagunahillsca.gov/supplementalagenda> and at the respective public meeting.



## City of Laguna Hills City Council / Planning Agency Staff Report

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**Date:** October 7, 2025  
**To:** Mayor and Council Members  
**From:** Greg Simonian, City Attorney  
**Issue:** First Public Hearing to Consider Composition of Districts for Commencing the Process to Transition to By-District Elections

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**Recommendation:** That the City Council: 1. Receive and file introduction to districting presentation prepared by the City's retained expert demographer National Demographics Corporation; and 2. Conduct the First Public Hearing necessary for commencing the process to transition to by-district elections, review and consider input regarding the composition of districts from interested members of the public, and provide further direction to City staff.

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### **Background:**

Since incorporating as a city in 1991, members of the City Council of the City of Laguna Hills have been elected by the at-large method of election rather than by the by-district election system; the at-large method of election is one in which the voters of the entire jurisdiction elect the members to the governing body; the by-district method of election is a method of electing members to the governing body of a political subdivision in which the candidate must reside within an election district that is a divisible part of the political subdivision and is elected only by the voters residing within that election district.

In 2002, the State Legislature enacted the California Voting Rights Act ("CVRA"), modifying burden of proof requirements contained in the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 to make it much easier for plaintiffs to challenge the at-large system of elections for cities. The CVRA prohibits a public agency from using at-large elections if it impairs the ability of a protected class, as defined, to elect candidates of its choice or otherwise influence the outcome of an election. The CVRA includes the imposition of district-

based elections by a court as a remedy to violations of the Act, and requires the public agency to pay all legal and court fees should the plaintiff prevail in court.

In a letter received by the City Clerk on June 20, 2023, Michelle R. Jackson, an attorney representing an undisclosed registered voter and resident of the City of Laguna Hills, alleged that the City's at-large elections system violates the CVRA because it results in "racially polarized voting" that dilutes the impact of Latino voters. The 2023 letter demanded that the City voluntarily change its at-large system for electing City Council members to a district-based system to avoid litigation. The initial demand letter failed to identify the name of the Prospective Plaintiff and contained no direct evidence of any racially polarized voting prepared by a qualified demographer. Despite repeated requests, attorney Michelle Jackson refused to identify the name of the Prospective Plaintiff.

On August 28, 2025, the City Clerk received a follow-up letter from attorney Michelle R. Jackson, dated August 25, 2025, wherein Ms. Jackson referenced her initial June 20, 2023 letter and renewed her demand that the City voluntarily change from the current at-large election system to by-district elections. In her August 25, 2025 renewed demand letter, attorney Michelle Jackson identified for the first time the Prospective Plaintiff as being the "Voter Equality Association" and "Arthur Sanchez," a registered voter in the City, and provided the City with some additional information regarding her assertion that the City's at-large election system violates the California Voting Rights Act; however, once again failing to provide any direct evidence of racially polarized voting prepared by a qualified demographer. In her August 25, 2025 renewed demand letter, Ms. Jackson once again demanded that the City voluntary change to by-district elections and threatened litigation should the City fail to voluntarily change to by-district elections.

In response to Ms. Jackson's renewed CVRA claim, and after identifying the name of the Prospective Plaintiff, the City Council adopted a Resolution of Intent to Transition to By-District Elections at its September 23, 2025 regular meeting, in advance of the October 15, 2025 deadline imposed by Ms. Jackson.

**Discussion:**

Before adopting district-based elections, the City must prepare a draft map or maps for public review and consideration; however, pursuant to State law, before drawing any maps, the City must first hold at least two public hearings over a period of no more than 30 days for the purpose of allowing interested members of the public the opportunity to provide input regarding the districts' boundaries and composition.

Tonight’s public hearing is the first of two “pre-map” public hearings, with the second scheduled for October 14, 2025.

The map drawing process by the City begins after these initial two public hearings. The City Council will then define the criteria used to create one or more proposed district maps and present the draft map or maps for public review and comment at two subsequent public hearings. Members of the public may also submit maps for review and consideration. All proposed maps will be made available to the public at least seven days prior to each of these two additional public hearings. The final third and fourth public hearings must be held within 45 days of each other. During the third and fourth public hearings, the City Council will also determine the “sequencing” of the elections. This means that the Council will decide which districts will be up for election at which general municipal election, so that they will be staggered between 2026 and 2028.

Districting information will be featured on the City’s website at the following official City web address: <https://www.lagunahillsca.gov/districting>. In addition, the City’s website will be populated with information about how the public can participate and also provide answers to frequently asked districting questions.

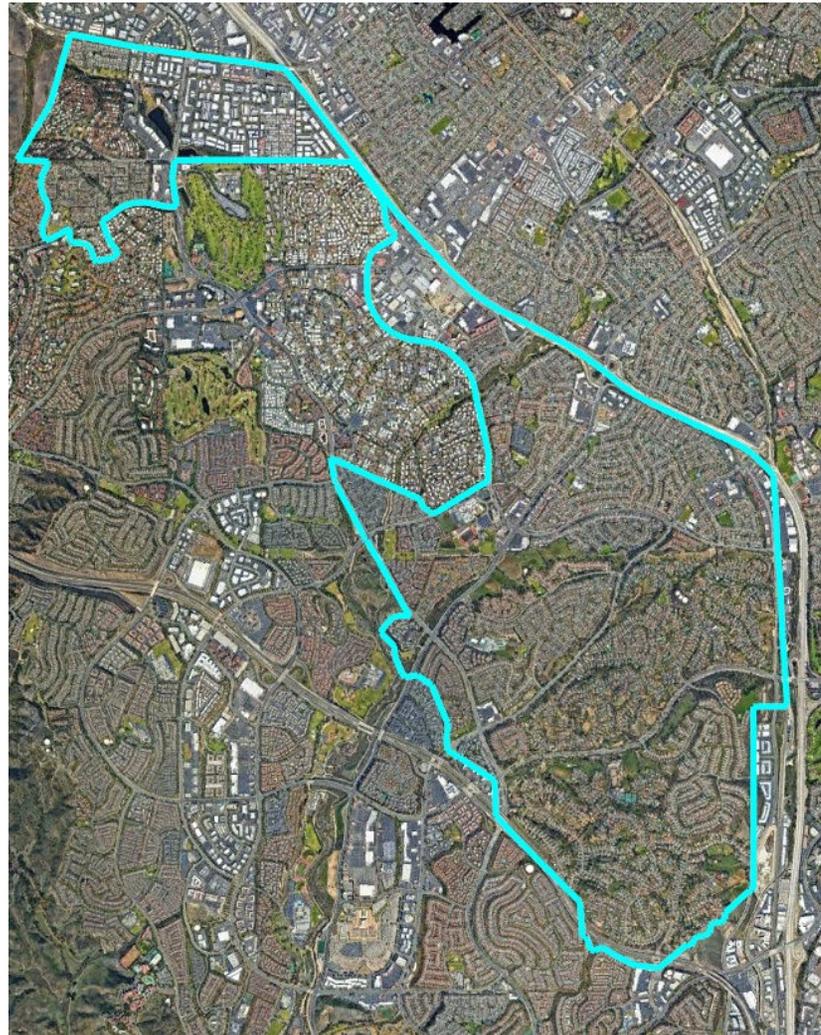
The next public hearing for the Council to receive and consider input from the public concerning the composition of voting districts is scheduled for October 14, 2025. The public is also encouraged to provide input via email to [jlee@lagunahillsca.gov](mailto:jlee@lagunahillsca.gov).

**Conclusion:**

The creation and approval of voting district maps is intended to be a transparent, interactive public process. Voting district maps must be prepared in compliance with certain State and Federal requirements; therefore, the use of qualified expert demographer is required. Of import is Elections Code Section 10010(b), which provides that, in determining the sequence of the district elections, the city council shall give special consideration to the purposes of the CVRA and it shall take into consideration the preferences expressed by members of the districts. The districting process must also include consideration of the following criteria when drawing district maps: 1) geographically contiguous; 2) undivided neighborhoods and “communities of interest”; 3) easily identifiable boundaries/ natural geographic boundaries; 4) compactness; and 5) all voting districts be as nearly equal in population as possible. Finally, federal caselaw prohibits drawing districts with race as a predominate factor.

**Attachments:**

1. Introduction to Districting, Prepared by National Demographics Corporation



# City of Laguna Hills

## Introduction to Districting

October 7, 2025

Dr. Justin Levitt, Vice-President  
National Demographics Corporation

# Election Systems

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1. “At Large”
2. “From Trustee Area” or “Residence” Trustee Area
3. “By Trustee Area”

The California Voting Rights Act was written to specifically encourage by-district elections.

# California Voting Rights Act (CVRA)

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- Under the Federal Voting Rights Act (passed in 1965), a jurisdiction must fail 4 factual tests before it is in violation of the law.
  
- The California VRA makes it significantly easier for plaintiffs to force jurisdictions into “by-district” election systems by eliminating two of the US Supreme Court *Gingles* tests:
  - ~~■ Can the protected class constitute the majority of a district?~~
  - Does the protected class vote as a bloc?
  - Do the voters who are not in the protected class vote in a bloc to defeat the preferred candidates of the protected class?
  - ~~■ Do the “totality of circumstances” indicate race is a factor in elections?~~
  
- Liability is now established by just the presence of racially polarized voting and dilution of the protected class’s ability to elect or influence the outcome of elections.

# CVRA Impact

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- **Switched (or in the process of switching) as a result of CVRA:**
  - At least 328 school districts
  - 46 Community College Districts
  - 200+ cities
  - 1 County Board of Supervisors
  - 75 water and other special districts.
  
- **Palmdale, Santa Clara and Santa Monica fought “on the merits.” All lost.**
  - Santa Monica: CA Supreme Court sent case back down. Now back in Superior Court.
  - Palmdale spent about \$1.8 million, Santa Clara \$1.37 million, and Santa Monica over \$7 million, just on their defense.
  - Santa Monica plaintiffs requested \$22 million
  - So far, no jurisdiction has won a case.
  
- **Key settlements:**
  - Palmdale: \$4.7 million
  - Santa Clara: \$3.8 million
  - Modesto: \$3 million
  - Highland: \$1.3 million
  - Anaheim: \$1.1 million
  - Whittier: \$1 million
  - Santa Barbara: \$600,000
  - Tulare Hospital: \$500,000
  - Camarillo: \$233,000
  - Compton Unified: \$200,000
  - Madera Unified: about \$170,000
  - Hanford Joint Union Schools: \$118,000
  - Merced City: \$42,000
  
- **An estimated \$20 million in total settlements and court awards so far.**

# Districting Process 1

Step	Description
<b>Two Initial Hearings</b> October 7 & 14, 2025	Held prior to release of draft maps. Education and to solicit input on the composition of districts.
<b>Community Workshop</b> October 15, 2025	Education and to solicit input on the composition of districts.
<b>First Deadline for Community Maps</b> October 17, 2025	Maps must be in by 5 pm Last day to receive maps for processing for the October 28 <sup>th</sup> Public Hearing
<b>Release draft maps</b> October 21, 2025	Maps must be posted at least 7 days prior to 3 <sup>rd</sup> hearing.
<b>Third hearing on the draft maps</b> October 28, 2025	First of two meetings to discuss and revise the draft maps and to discuss the election sequence.
<b>Community Workshop</b> Early November 2025	Date To Be Announced Community opportunity to discuss draft maps

# Districting Process 2

Step	Description
<b>Second Deadline for Community Maps</b> November 7, 2025	Maps must be in by 5 pm Last day to receive maps for processing for the November 18 <sup>th</sup> Public Hearing
<b>Release revised maps</b> November 11, 2025	Maps must be posted at least 7 days prior to 4 <sup>th</sup> hearing.
<b>Fourth hearing on the draft maps</b> November 18, 2025	Second of two meetings to discuss and revise the draft maps and to discuss the election sequence.
<b>Map Adoption</b> December 9, 2025	Final map and sequence must be posted at least 7 days prior to adoption.
<b>First election</b> November 3, 2026	First elections in new districts in 2026 & 2028

# Districting Rules and Goals

## 1. Federal Laws

**Equal Population**  
**Federal Voting Rights Act**  
**No Racial Gerrymandering**



## 2. California Criteria

*In prioritized order:*

1. **Geographically contiguous**
2. **Avoid division of neighborhoods and “communities of interest”**  
(Socio-economic geographic areas that should be kept together)
3. **Avoid division of Cities and Census Designated Places**
4. **Easily identifiable boundaries**
5. **Compact**  
(Do not bypass one group of people to get to a more distant group of people)

## 2. California Prohibition

“Shall not adopt election district boundaries for the purpose of favoring or discriminating against an incumbent, political candidate, or political party.”

## 3. Other Traditional Redistricting Principles

**Future population growth**

# Key Demographics

Each of the five Districts will contain about 6,280 people.

“Citizen Voting Age Population” data from the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey is considered the best available data on “eligible voters.”

Category	Field	Total
2020 Census	Total Population	31,399
Total Pop.	Hispanic/Latino	24%
	NH White	54%
	NH Black	2%
	NH Asian/Pac.Isl.	19%
	NH Native Amer.	1%
Citizen Voting Age Pop	Total	22,690
	Hisp	17%
	NH White	62%
	NH Black	2%
	Asian/Pac.Isl.	17%
	Native Amer.	1%

# Demographic Summary

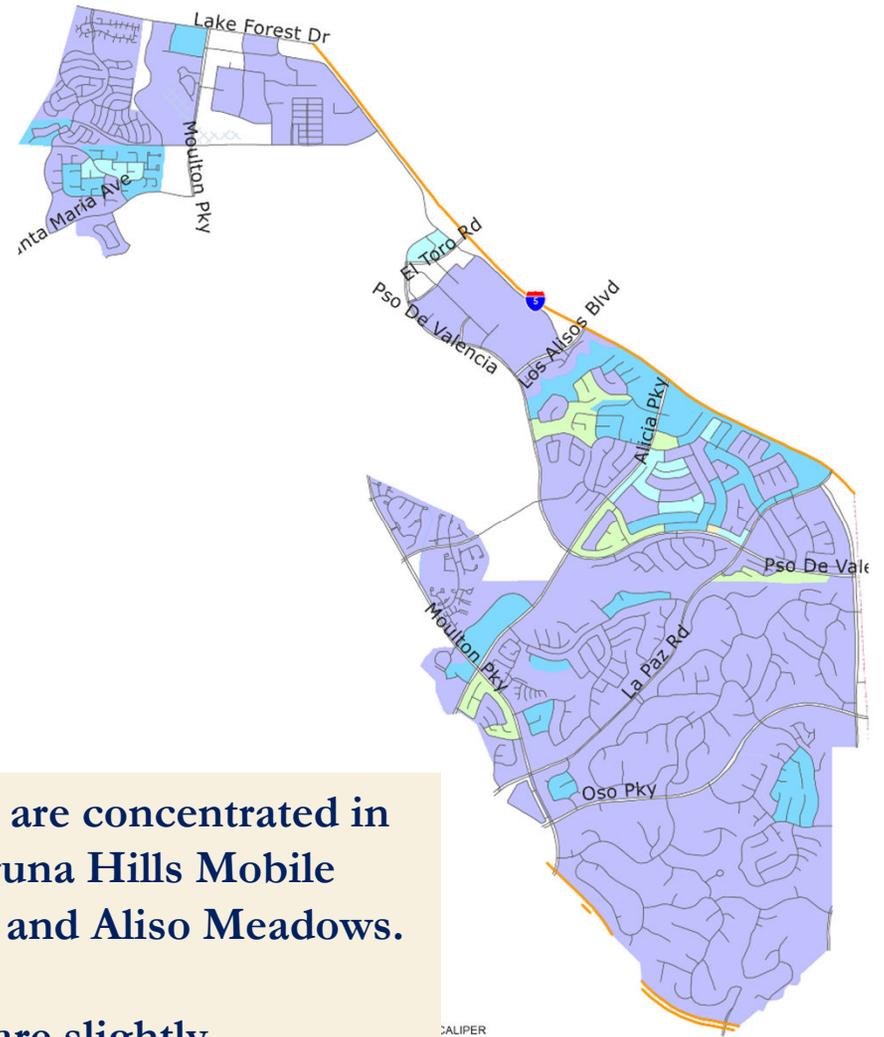
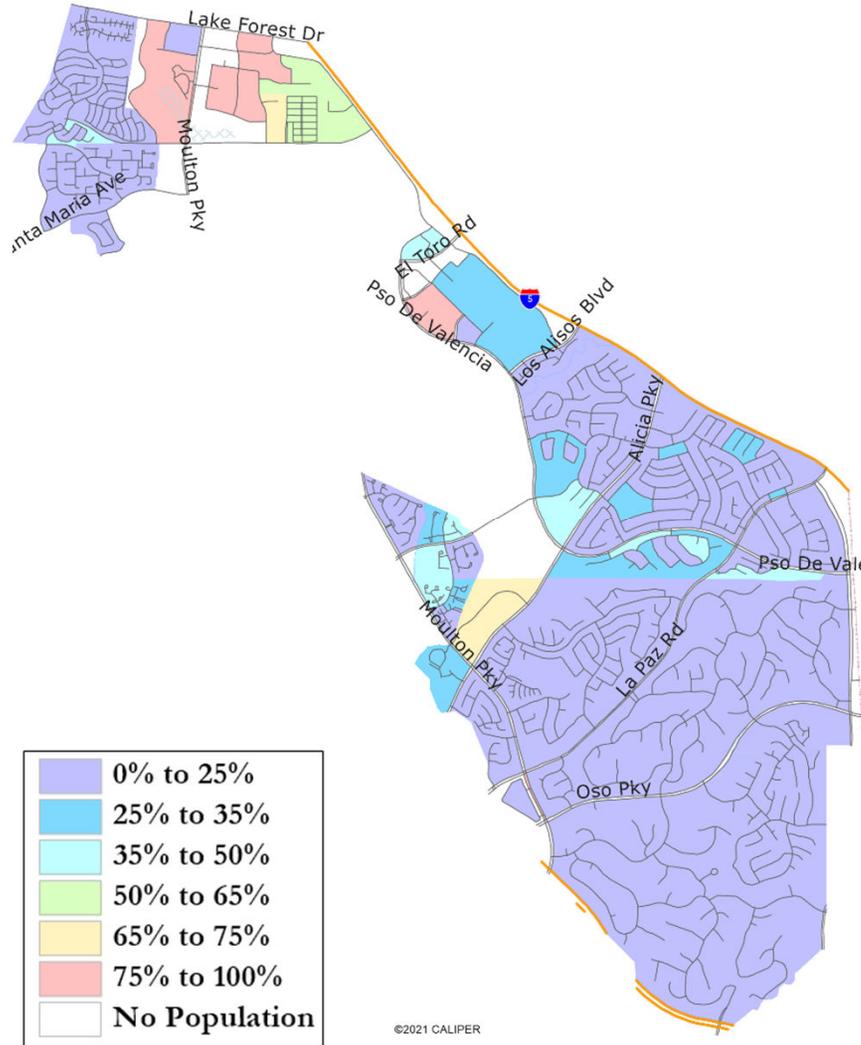
Each of the five Districts will contain about 6,280 people.

Additional demographic information from the American Community Survey and Statewide Database can be used to understand communities

Category	Field	Total	Category	Field	Total
2020 Census	Total Population	31,399	Age	age0-19	21%
Total Pop.	Hispanic/Latino	24%		age20-60	51%
	NH White	54%		age60plus	28%
	NH Black	2%	Immigration	immigrants	26%
	NH Asian/Pac Isl.	19%		naturalized	69%
	NH Native Amer.	1%	Language spoken at home	english	66%
Citizen Voting Age Pop	Total	22,690		spanish	14%
	Hisp	17%		asian-lang	10%
	NH White	62%	other lang	10%	
	NH Black	2%	Language Fluency	Speaks Eng. "Less than Very Well"	13%
	Asian/Pac Isl.	17%		Education (among those age 25+)	hs-grad
Native Amer.	1%	bachelor	35%		
		graduatedegree	18%		
Voter Registration (Nov 2024)	Total	20,473	Child in Household	child-under18	28%
	Latino est.	15%	Pct of Pop. Age 16+	employed	62%
	Spanish-Surnamed	13%		Household Income	income 0-25k
	Asian-Surnamed	9%	income 25-50k		8%
	Filipino-Surnamed	2%	income 50-75k		10%
	NH White est.	73%	income 75-200k		46%
NH Black	2%	income 200k-plus	25%		
			Housing Stats	single family	72%
Voter Turnout (Nov 2022)	Total	12,256		multi-family	28%
	Latino est.	11%		rented	31%
	Spanish-Surnamed	10%		owned	69%
	Asian-Surnamed	7%	Total population data from California's adjusted 2020 Census data. Citizen Voting Age Population, Age, Immigration, and other demographics from the 2019-2023 American Community Survey and Special Tabulation 5-year data. Turnout and Registration data from California Statewide Database. "Latino" figures calculated by NDC using Census Bureau's Latino undercount by surname estimate.		
	Filipino-Surnamed	1%			
NH White est.	77%				
NH Black	3%				
Voter Turnout (Nov 2024)	Total	16,015			
	Latino est.	13%			
	Spanish-Surnamed	12%			
	Asian-Surnamed	9%			
	Filipino-Surnamed	2%			
NH White est.	75%				
NH Black est.	2%				

# Latino CVAP

# Asian CVAP



**Latinos are concentrated in the Laguna Hills Mobile Estates and Aliso Meadows.**

**Asians are slightly concentrated along Alicia Parkway.**

# Defining Neighborhoods

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**1<sup>st</sup> Question: How do you describe or name the area where you live?**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Question: What are its geographic boundaries?**

**What other neighborhoods are there?**

**Examples of physical features defining a neighborhood boundary:**

- Natural neighborhood dividing lines, such as highway or major roads, rivers, canals and/or hills
- Areas around parks or schools
- Other neighborhood landmarks



# Defining Communities of Interest

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California Elections Code Section 21130(c)(2):

**A “community of interest” is a population that shares common social or economic interests that should be included within a single district for purposes of its effective and fair representation.**

The shared interests may include (but are not limited to):

- ❑ Shared public policy concerns such as education, public safety, public health, environment, housing, transportation, and access to social services. cultural districts;
- ❑ Shared socioeconomic characteristics;
- ❑ Similar voter registration rates and participation rates; and /or
- ❑ Shared histories.

Definitions of Communities of Interest may not include relationships with political parties, incumbents, or political candidates.

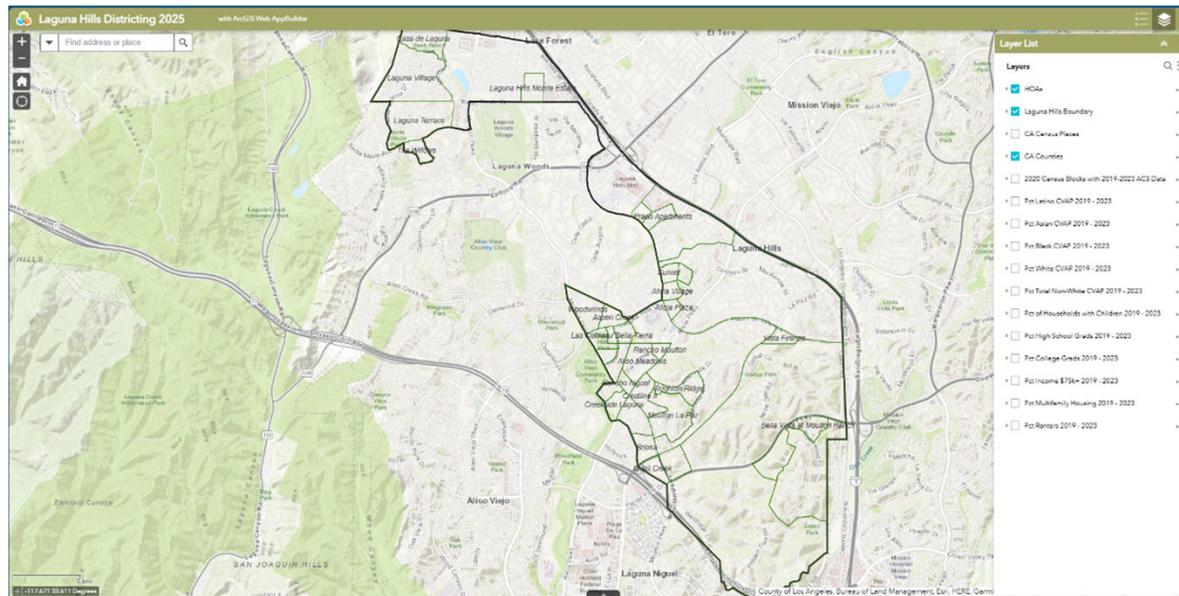
# Census Block Problems

- Census Block lines (shown in pink) do not turn out well where there are hillsides, cul-de-sacs or multiple developments not clearly bounded by streets.
- Census Block lines in Laguna Hills cut through neighborhoods and combine neighborhood pieces almost randomly.
- NDC has carefully divided the Census Blocks and assigned their population shares to the underlying neighborhoods.
- The base layer of geography for maps will be based on local neighborhood boundaries within Census Blocks.



# Public Mapping and Map Review Tools

- Different tools for different purposes
- Different tools for different levels of technical skill and interest
  - Simple “review draft maps” tool
  - Paper-based “Draw a draft map” tool



# Your Turn:

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1. **What area do you consider your neighborhood?**
2. **What are your “communities of interest”?**

For each answer, please provide:

- **Geographic boundaries**
- **The history or defining shared characteristic of the area**

In the absence of public testimony, planning records and other similar documents may provide definition.

1. **Any other questions about the process, criteria, maps, tools or any other part of this process?**



# Share Your Thoughts

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## Website

<https://maplh.org/>

## Email

[jlee@lagunahillsca.gov](mailto:jlee@lagunahillsca.gov)

## Phone

(949) 707-2630