



916 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
January 12, 2022

Hon. Melinda A. Johnson (Ret.)
Hon. Abraham Khan (Ret.)
Hon. Elizabeth Allen White (Ret.)
City of Santa Barbara Redistricting Commission

Dear Redistricting Commissioners,

The non-profit Citizens Planning Association, representing residents from throughout Santa Barbara County, has supported sound land use policies on the Central Coast since 1960. As such we have seen many redistricting plans. Many CPA members followed closely the public hearing process when the original districts were drawn and adopted, subject to City's settlement agreement in *Banales v City of Santa Barbara*, SBSC Case No. 1468167.

The CPA Board and our members, many of whom are City residents, urge you to approve a map that makes as few changes as possible. We are concerned that two of the 3 draft maps presented by your consultant make drastic changes to the existing boundaries without honoring the original process or intent, therefore we would like to offer these comments:

Electoral districts were established in 2015 and have successfully accomplished the goal of complying with the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and specifically establishing "two electoral districts in which Latino eligible voters constitute a majority of eligible voters, tailored to the greatest extent possible consistent with traditional redistricting law so as to address issue of vote dilution."

Under that agreement, two of the districts were established to ensure that the Latino/Hispanic Citizen Voting Age Population was over 50%, and that there was an open and public process for drawing the other district boundaries.

We are concerned that there appears to have been very little public participation and outreach since the official adjusted data was received. While some of this is likely the result of reduced in-person meetings due to the ongoing COVID pandemic, our members noted it was difficult to access the materials available to the public. Specifically, there is no information on the City's Redistricting Website about any draft maps that may (or may not) have been provided by the public. If few maps were submitted, we feel this is an indication of lack of effective outreach, not lack of real interest.

As you commissioners are not local residents, CPA felt we should share information about our community.

First, the intent of the original districts has been successful. The Council is more ethnically and economically diverse, and reflective of the city's changing demographics. The districts drawn to comply with the Voting Rights Act have been successful. The Council is more diverse and more reflective of the city's demographics, including two Hispanic/Latinx individuals. Councilmembers now also include renters and younger representatives.

When the original districts were drawn in 2015, there was extensive input from the public about such items as making sure that as many council districts as possible represented State Street, our main commercial corridor – as a result all 6 of the current districts touch State Street. Likewise, it was seen as important that each district have a significant commercial area – thus resulting in the First District having the Milpas Corridor along with a portion of State Street; 2nd District having the Mesa Shopping area and part of lower state; 3rd District having San Andres and a portion of State Street; 4th District included Coast Village Road and a part of the San Roque/State Street Commercial Corridor; 5th District included La Cumbre Plaza, and upper State Street; 6th District included the downtown corridor and State Street. Likewise it was important to residents that to the greatest extent possible, each district included a portion of the waterfront, 4 of the 5 existing districts include the waterfront.

Also, since 58% of the city are renters, it is logical that they would have solid representation in districts, but we also recognize that the homeowners are also a community of interest, and are geographically more highly concentrated on the Mesa, Riviera and San Roque. Currently the Riviera & East San Roque, are connected in District 4, which is also linked by their very valid concerns regarding wildfire and evacuation planning, having been evacuated numerous times during the most recent wildfires that threatened our city.

The CPA Board and our members are concerned that two of the 3 draft maps presented by your consultant propose drastic changes to the existing boundaries which do not seem to be beneficial to neighborhoods, communities of interest nor city residents as a whole.

We urge you to make as few changes as possible to meet the requirements of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Marell Brooks, President
Citizens Planning Association