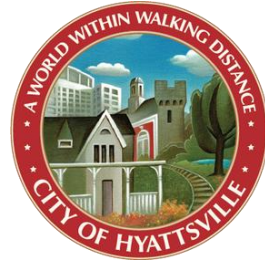


City of Hyattsville

2022 Redistricting Commission

memo on final recommendations



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With support from City of Hyattsville staff, especially Shakira Louimarre (Race & Equity Officer), Sekour Mason (GIS Technician), and Cindy Zork (Communications Manager)

1. Summary

After each decennial US Census, the City must review and make any necessary adjustments to Ward boundaries to ensure they have substantially equal populations. Hyattsville's population grew by 20.7% from April 2010 to April 2020, but this growth was concentrated in new developments in Ward 3 along East–West Highway and in Ward 1 along Route 1. Therefore, changes to the current Ward boundaries are necessary to meet the goal of population-balanced Wards. In Summer 2022 the City of Hyattsville appointed a Redistricting Commission of residents to recommend new maps; through a period of research, discussion, and public outreach, this Commission offers two map proposals to the Council for consideration.

- The “Minimal Adjustments” concept makes a small number of changes to current Ward boundaries in order to create new Wards, compliant with requirements, while trying to avoid moving many residents. While some changes are inevitable due to where growth is concentrated in the City, some residents expressed that being moved by the City can decrease one’s sense of agency, and that you’re seen by local government as a statistic and not an individual. Our final version of this map concept is identical to that previously presented to Council in September 2022.
- The “Growth Conscious” concept makes larger changes. Ongoing and expected housing developments since the 2020 Census are likely to substantially increase the populations of Wards 3 and 5 over the decade to come. This map therefore makes changes aimed towards keeping Ward populations more balanced through the decade, in order that individuals’ voting power and representation remains roughly proportionate between Wards, and the hope that the redistricting process following the 2030 Census may result in smaller future changes to Ward boundaries. This was an important concern to some residents. Residents in general also perceive straight lines along “natural boundaries” (major roads, parks etc) to be “fair”, and “cut-out” blocks or other shapes to be “political” and for the line-drawer’s benefit; therefore, this map uses more such straight lines. Our

final version of this map concept has some modifications compared to that previously presented to Council in September 2022, based on feedback from the community and Council members.

The Commission believe that both maps are reasonable and compliant with all requirements of the Ward redistricting process and feel that Council's choice should depend on the extent to which they prefer to balance these competing concept (i.e., minimize change to residents' Wards and representatives now, vs. maintain more balanced populations through the coming decade and smaller Ward boundary changes following the 2030 Census).

We refer readers to our previous September 2022 report and presentation to Council, and October 2022 Public Hearing presentation, for additional background information including on the scope of the Commission, data sources available, and additional background and motivation behind our thinking. This memo focuses on the specifics of our final two map recommendations, and discussion of a further concept request by Council that ultimately we did not serve the best interests of the City. City GIS Technician Sekour Mason developed an interactive web tool where these two recommended maps and relevant Census data can be visualized. This is available at <https://arcg.is/OXfqP> . We welcome any questions to redistricting@hyattsville.org.

2. Major ideas guiding our recommendations

The reader is referred to our September 2022 report for a more complete picture of our thought process. In brief we sought the expertise of each other, Hyattsville's Race & Equity Officer Shakira Louimarre, and the public through extensive outreach efforts. We also sought feedback from Council members (though were primarily guided by the public). This led us to try to:

- Provide recommendations consistent with the expressed wishes of Hyattsville's residents: both in big picture as well as considering specific suggestions about blocks.
 - A significant proportion favor as small changes as possible, with comments including *"Our elected representatives should not be constantly swapped out every 10 years (unless we vote them out)"* and *"As a person who has been part of Ward XX and then redistricted to Ward YY and now you are seeking to move me to Ward ZZ you make me and my family feel like you don't have a clue as to how this affects life in our part of this city."* These are strong concerns that affect the perceived legitimacy and credibility of the process and, by extension, City governance in the minds of some residents. Ward 2 residents noted that the recent Special Election to Council mean some (moved out by redistricting) have just voted for someone who will no longer represent them and others (moved in) have just missed the opportunity to choose their representative.
 - Conversely, those advocating for larger changes argued *"It's a matter of voting power and representation"* and *"We should account for developments to make sure we all have the same voice going forwards"*. These two competing viewpoints cannot be easily reconciled within a single map, due to the current boundaries and population balance of the Wards, and the ongoing housing

development. This therefore led to our recommendation of two maps, one from each concept, with Council to weigh these factors in their deliberations. Both maps were further informed by some residents' block-specific suggestions.

- Focus on keeping communities of interest together. This includes areas with significant populations of historically-marginalized groups, whose voices might be diluted if split up, but also keeping distinct neighborhoods, administrative areas (e.g. the Arts District), and individual HOAs, condo associations, and apartment communities within single Wards where possible.
- Prefer boundaries that are, where possible, straight lines as they are “fair” while “cut-out blocks look like they were done for political purposes” and “it makes me suspicious it was for someone’s benefit and not mine.” When we presented maps, those with straighter lines were described by residents as “seeming fairer”.
- Minimize boundaries dividing neighbors along or across residential streets, preferring boundaries through park or commercial areas, empty lots, major thoroughfares, or behind properties. Residential streets were often seen as poor places to draw boundaries because “they have common impacts on both sides” and “I should be in the same Ward as my neighbors beside me and across the street”. In some cases, however, this was unavoidable.
- Favor maps that are at least as compact than the current ones. For this we used the Polsby-Popper metric; again, more details are in our previous report, but this calculates a score from 0 to 1 to each Ward where 0 represents a minimally compact boundary (i.e., a very “wiggly” or snake-like structure) and 1 represents a maximally compact shape (a circle). We are constrained in this by Hyattsville’s external boundaries but felt that, if the current Wards are sufficiently compact to meet the City’s criterion, then maps with a similar or higher Polsby-Popper metric should be as well.

Table 1 provides the total number of expected new housing units (of all types) in each Ward (based on current boundaries). Some of this construction has been completed since the 2020 Census was taken, although those new residents are not included in the population counts used for redistricting. Of the 3,437 new housing units expected at present, 55% fall within the borders of the current Ward 3 and 34% in the current Ward 5, with the majority of the rest in what is currently Ward 1. Together these have potential to add population in excess of a current City Ward to Hyattsville. This provides motivation to consider these new developments in order that Ward populations (and thus individuals’ representation and voting power with respect to Council) remain approximately in balance throughout the decade.

Table 1. Total number of expected new housing units in current Ward boundaries in the 2020-2030 time frame, based on current developments. Data courtesy Taylor Robey, Hyattsville City Planner.

Current Ward	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Total new housing units	325	83	1,876	0	1,153	3,437

3. The “Minimal Adjustments” concept

The first concept we endorse, “Minimal Adjustments”, is shown in Figure 1. This achieves compliant Ward maps while moving the fewest possible into a different Ward. This map will therefore be less disruptive to current residents but will likely even mean more drastic changes to Hyattsville’s Ward boundaries will be necessary following the 2030 Census, and does not go as far in unifying communities of interest as our other concept. The changes compared to current Ward boundaries are:

- The portion of Ward 3 east of Queen’s Chapel Rd becomes split between Wards 1 and 2 at Queensbury Rd.
- The Suffrage Point development is unified into Ward 1 by moving the portion of south of Hamilton St. Presently it is split between Wards 1 and 2.
- Houses and Park Place Condominiums south-east of Hamilton St and 38th Ave by Driskell Park are moved into Ward 5.
- Volunteer Fire Department buildings are unified into Ward 3 (presently split between Wards 3 and 4).

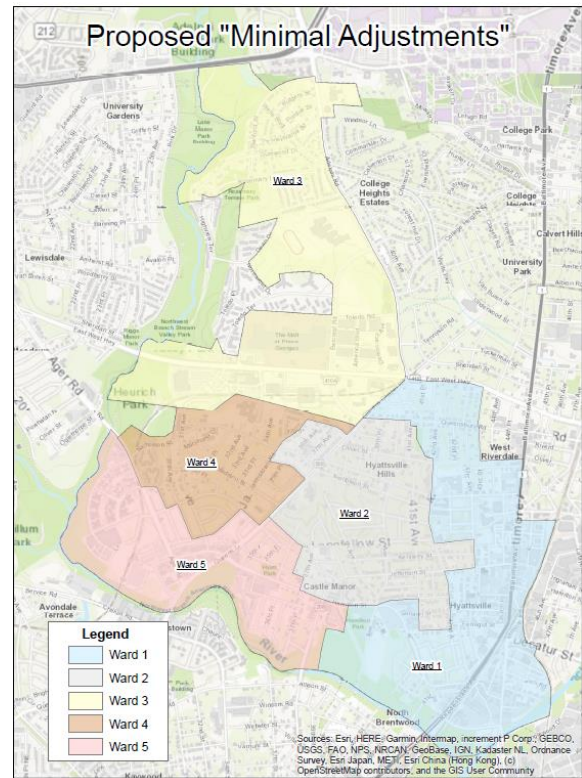


Figure 1. The Minimal Adjustments map.

The 38th Ave/Park Place and Fire Department alterations are examples of comments we heard repeatedly from members of the public when asking which blocks residents felt should be moved.

4. The “Growth Conscious” concept

The second concept we endorse, “Growth Conscious”, is shown in Figure 2. This incorporates the same changes to current boundaries as Minimal Adjustments but goes further in order that coming developments will keep Ward populations and thus residents’ representation on Council more balanced as people move into the City to fill the new development under construction or in the late stages of planning (Table 1). Compared to today’s Wards, Growth Conscious aims to keep Wards 3, 5, and (to a lesser extent) 1 to the lower part of the permissible population range (due to substantial development) and Wards 2 and 4 toward the upper (as these Wards have minimal or no expected development). These adjustments were achieved by further unification of condo associations and apartment communities into single Wards and replacing some boundaries with straighter lines, increasing public feelings of fairness, and puts one boundary behind a row of houses in order to keep communities of interest together. The changes compared to current Ward boundaries are:

- The portion of Ward 3 east of Queen’s Chapel Rd is moved entirely into Ward 2.
- The Ward 1-2 boundary runs along 42nd Ave, Queensbury Rd, and behind the row of houses on the northern side of Hamilton St. This also unifies the Suffrage Point development into Ward 1.
- The Ward 2-4 boundary becomes straight along Queen’s Chapel Rd. We note that these blocks had been moved into Ward 2 in the previous redistricting cycle.
- Houses and Park Place Condominiums south-east of Hamilton St and 38th Ave by Driskell Park are moved into Ward 5.
- Volunteer Fire Department buildings are unified into Ward 3 (presently split between Wards 3 and 4).
- Hamilton Manor Apartments are unified into Ward 5 (presently split between Wards 4 and 5), by moving part the block bounded by Queen’s Chapel Rd, Lancer Dr, Jamestown Rd, and Madison St into Ward 5.
- Ward 4’s western boundary extends further down Ager Rd and behind the houses south of Jamestown Rd. This also unifies the North Pointe apartments into Ward 4 (presently split between Wards 4 and 5).

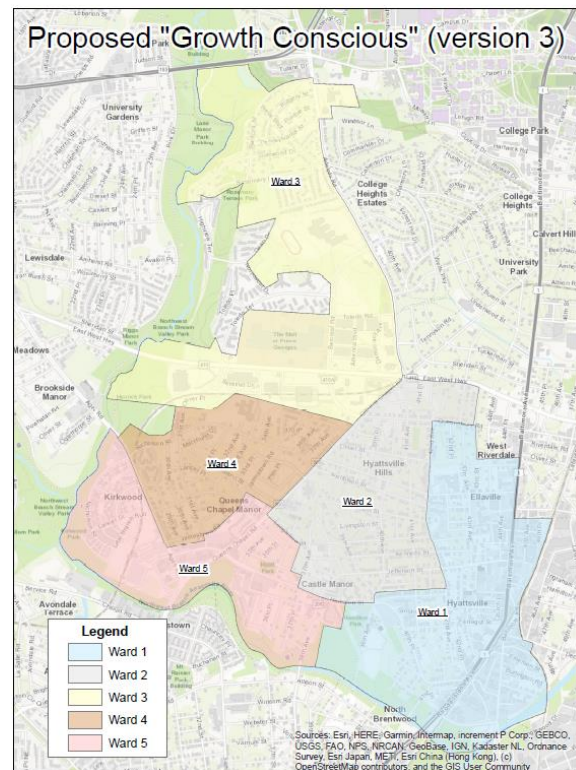


Figure 2. The Growth Conscious map.

The differences between this version of Growth Conscious and that presented to Council in September 2022 are:

- The Ward 1 / 2 boundary along Hamilton St has been changed to run behind the row of houses along Hamilton, as opposed to through the middle of the street.
- The Ward 4 expansion along Ager Road and unification of North Pointe into Ward 4.
- The unification of Hamilton Manor into Ward 5.

The above changes, as well as the 38th Ave/Park Place and Fire Department alterations compared to current Ward maps, are examples of comments we heard repeatedly from members of the public and/or Council members when asking which blocks residents felt should be moved.

It is likely that this option will mean fewer changes will be necessary following the next Census and redistricting cycle. This map does, however, change the Wards of a greater number of Hyattsville residents, which is more disruptive.

5. Summary population and compactness metrics.

Table 2 shows the populations of the current Wards, together with the populations under the proposed Minimal Adjustments and Growth Conscious maps. Both proposed map scenarios are compliant with the permissible range of 3,814 to 4,661 people per Ward. Ward 3 is identical within both map concepts as the proposed change to its boundaries was seen as the most fair and logical way to adjust Ward 3.

Table 2. Ward populations based on 2020 Census data for the current Wards, together with the proposed Minimal Adjustments and Growth Conscious Wards. Red indicates non-compliance of current maps.

Map	Ward 1	Ward 2	Ward 3	Ward 4	Ward 5
Current	4376	3859	5201	4026	3725
Minimal Adjustments	4640	4466	4055	4026	4000
Growth Conscious	4226	4435	4055	4423	4048

Both maps insert Ward boundaries within individual census blocks. As census data are only available at the census block scale, we are unable to provide exact population counts for the Wards. We also note that intentional data obfuscation by the Census Bureau for privacy protection means that even the census block data are estimates, not true counts. Our sub-block population estimates divide the total census block population by the total number of housing units and then count the number of housing units which would end up within each Ward for the split block. We feel the added uncertainty in population count introduced by splitting blocks is justifiable given (1) the City has no control over census block definitions (this is done by the Census Bureau) and resident sentiments consistently favor splitting some, outweighing the decrease in precision and (2) both our proposed maps have Ward populations falling comfortably within permitted variances, such that even an error of ± 100 people would not render the maps non-compliant (except for Ward 1 under Minimal Adjustments).

Table 3 shows the PP scores quantifying compactness of the Wards under current and proposed maps. For both Minimal Adjustments (and particularly for Growth Conscious), PP scores for individual Wards range from slightly decreased to greatly increased from current values. Ward 5 becomes slightly less compact under both proposals. The average PP scores for both Minimal Adjustments (0.34) and Growth Conscious (0.42) are higher than for the current Wards (0.32). If the current Wards were judged to be “reasonably compact” during the last redistricting cycle, by this logic both proposed options should be too.

Table 3. Polsby-Popper (PP) compactness scores for current and proposed maps.

Map	Ward 1	Ward 2	Ward 3	Ward 4	Ward 5	Average
Current	0.28	0.41	0.16	0.37	0.40	0.32
Minimal Adjustments	0.27	0.47	0.20	0.40	0.37	0.34
Growth Conscious	0.45	0.54	0.20	0.58	0.33	0.42

6. Additional potential scenarios discussed at suggestion of Council

At their October 2022 meeting, Council requested we consider some additional block movements to assess their feasibility and compatibility with the mapping requirements and our goals to achieve fair representation for all residents. Some of these made it into the final Growth Conscious map as described above. We did not include them in our final Minimal Adjustments recommendation as we felt that making more changes is against the Minimal Adjustments concept (i.e., don't move more people than necessary). Here we briefly discuss the others to illustrate why in the end we did not incorporate them into Growth Conscious. Specific other suggestions from Council included:

- Expanding Ward 5 into the western half of Ward 2, to make its boundary align more closely with the boundary of the West Hyattsville Sector Plan (which cuts diagonally south-east from Queen's Chapel Rd south of Nicholson St, between 38th Ave and 39th Ave, down to Driskell Park), bringing all the West Hyattsville Sector into Wards 4 and 5. The particular focus here was on the southern portion of this region, excluding the Sacred Heart and Independence Court communities.
- Retaining the Ward 2 cutout in today's maps, to the west of Queen's Chapel Rd (and still present in Minimal Adjustments). Note that this change would be conceptually opposed to the above suggestion as this would expand Ward 2 further into the West Hyattsville Sector.
- Moving Suffrage Point wholly into Ward 2 instead of wholly into Ward 1.
- Expanding Ward 4 south-west to take in all of the area immediately East of Ager Rd in Ward 5, or north toward East-West Highway taking from Ward 3.

We found it difficult to create a map incorporating all these as invariably it put Wards' populations significantly outside the permitted ranges. Figure 3 is a mockup which did incorporate most of the above while still meeting population balance requirements. We note a northern expansion of Ward 4 is not feasible because any gain would split up a community within Ward 3 and would also make Ward 3 non-compliant (too small), so this map attempted to incorporate the West Hyattsville Sector Plan and Ward 4 southern expansion suggestions. However, these put Ward 2 population too low and Ward 4 too high—the only way to get a compliant map was then to restore the Ward 2 cutout across Queen's Chapel (which undermines the West Hyattsville Sector Plan unification strategy somewhat). Moving Suffrage Point into Ward 2 would not work as an alternative as Ward 4's population would remain too high. Conversely expanding Ward 5 eastwards but not expanding Ward 4 southwards would not work as Ward 5's population would be too high.

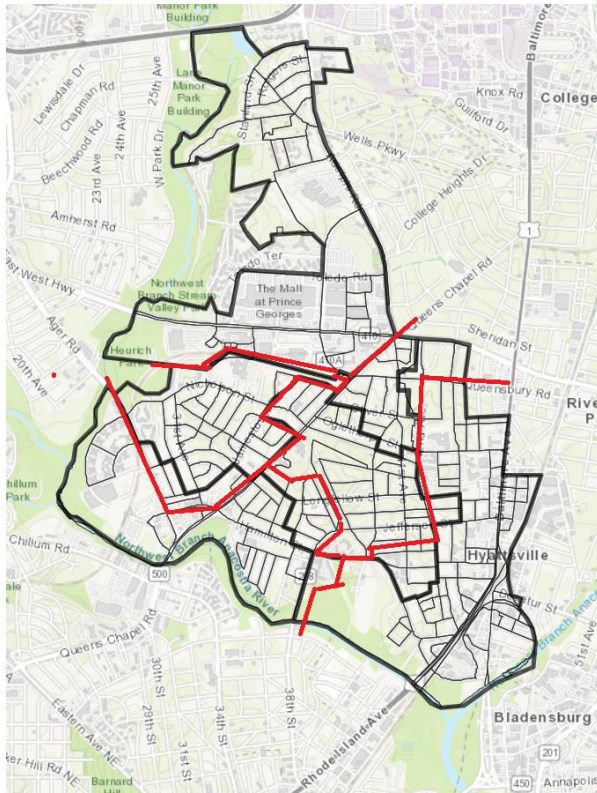


Figure 3. A mockup of a map taking Growth Conscious and attempting to implement several of Council's other suggestions. Red lines denote approximate future Ward boundaries under this scenario; thin black lines show Census blocks and thick lines today's Ward boundaries.

Ultimately, we voted not to present this map as a recommended option to Council, for several reasons. In no particular order:

- It moves a very high number of Hyattsville residents into new Wards, and this is not a map concept that the public have had (or will have, given Council's schedule for the redistricting process) time to digest and comment on and subsequently refine.
- We feel it puts Ward 5 as almost two separate lobes connected only by uninhabited land around Queen's Chapel, which seems against the spirit of the rules for contiguous Wards (although not the letter).
- Expanding Ward 5 to follow the West Hyattsville Sector Plan bounds is undermined by having to restore the portion of Ward 2 west of Queen's Chapel in order to obtain Wards with permissible populations. So, either way, the West Hyattsville Sector remains split between Wards 2, 4, and 5.
- As known developments in the City go ahead, it seems likely that following the 2030 Census Wards 3 and 5 will both have to shrink. The eastward expansion of Ward 5 might then need to be reversed at that time. While speculative, we have heard from several City residents that living in the same home but changing Wards every 10 years is disruptive and undermines trust in local governance (see earlier feedback). We therefore prefer to avoid recommending changes that are likely to reverse after the 2030 Census.