

# City of Hyattsville

## 2022 Redistricting Commission

### summary report



Members: Leland Dudek, Jennifer Gafford, Greta Mosher, T. Carter Ross (Recordkeeper), Alicia Sanchez Gill Freemyn, Andrew Sayer (Chair), Krystil Smith, Cynthia Totten

[redistricting@hyattsville.org](mailto:redistricting@hyattsville.org)

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

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## 1. Summary

Every 10 years, after the US Census, the City must review and make any necessary adjustments to the Ward Boundaries to ensure the Wards have substantially equal populations. The target variation is no more than 10% between the City's five Wards. The City Charter provides the Council with the authority to redraw boundaries at their discretion. In Summer 2022 the City of Hyattsville appointed a Redistricting Commission of residents to recommend new maps, as Wards 3 (5,201 residents) and 5 (3,725 residents) were recorded in the 2020 Census to have too many and too few people, respectively.

Through a period of research, discussion, and public outreach, this Commission offers two map proposals to the Council for consideration.

- One, named "Minimal Adjustments", makes a comparatively small number of changes to current Ward boundaries in order to create new Wards, compliant with requirements, while trying to avoid many residents finding themselves in new Wards. The motivation for this is that some residents expressed that the feeling of 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.
- The other, named "Growth Conscious", makes larger changes with two main goals. The first is that ongoing and expected housing developments since the 2020 Census, especially in the areas of current Wards 3 and 5, are likely to substantially skew the population of the Wards 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 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. The second is that many residents 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, so this growth-conscious population balance is achieved by removing certain cut-out blocks primarily around Ward 2.

Many of the adjustments recommended are the same in both proposals, as they seemed logical and fair under both concepts. The Commission believe that both maps are reasonable and compliant with all requirements of the Ward redistricting process and feel that the 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).

This report accompanies our presentation to City Council on 19 September 2022, providing additional background to our recommendations. It also makes recommendations to support the City's redistricting efforts following the next Census, anticipated in 2030, particularly in light of equity considerations. We welcome any questions to [redistricting@hyattsville.org](mailto:redistricting@hyattsville.org).

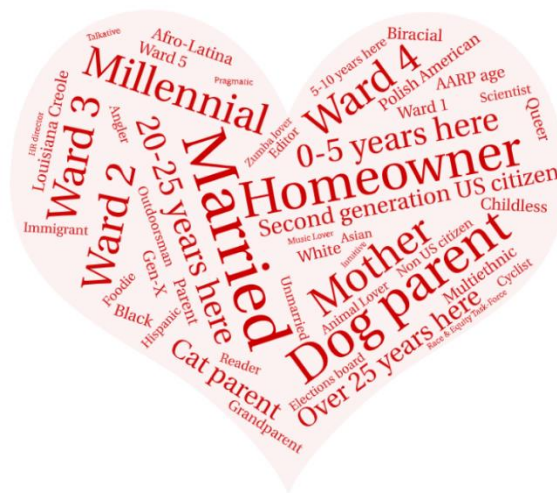
## 2. Who we are

The Redistricting Commission was convened as a nine-member body of volunteers in late June 2022. Five volunteers were appointed from existing City Committees; one of these (Cliff Mayo) resigned from the Commission early on for personal reasons. Four applied from the broader Hyattsville community and were selected by Council based on their interest and expertise. The authorship of this document and accompanying presentation reflects these eight members; one from each of Wards 1 and 5, and two from each of Wards 2, 3, and 4.

As well as each of the city's Wards, the eight of us represent a broad variety of backgrounds, perspectives, and expertise, united by our interest in helping Hyattsville foster an equitable environment for all residents. Figure 1 shows some adjectives we individually use to describe ourselves; the size of each word's text reflects how many of the group chose these words for themselves.

Initially, we chose Greta Mosher as our Chair. She stepped down from the Chair role (but not from the Commission) in late July 2022, and Andrew Sayer was chosen as the new Chair. T. Carter Ross served as Recorder throughout.

Our work was aided by several City of Hyattsville staff. In particular, we would like to recognize Communications Manager Cindy Zork, GIS Technician Sekour Mason, and Race & Equity Officer Shakira Louimarre. Their assistance and expertise were invaluable to the process. We commend them for their work with us and wish that this be recognized by Council and City administration.



*Figure 1. Word cloud self-describing Redistricting Commission members.*

### 3. Requirements of the redistricting process

The Commission was given the following requirements for the Ward redistricting process:

- **Wards must be population balanced with no more than 10% variation between Wards.** In the materials provided to us by the City, “no more than 10% variation” was defined as meaning each Ward must deviate by less than 10% from the population of hypothetical exactly equal population Wards. We were required to use 2020 Census population counts (and would like to note concerns about their accuracy voiced by some members of the public). With a total recorded population of 21,187, this corresponds to an average of 4,237.4 people per Ward and a permissible range of 3,814 to 4,661.
- **Wards must be reasonably compact and contiguous.** While “contiguous” is explicit, “reasonably compact” is not. We chose to use the Polsby-Popper score<sup>1</sup> (discussed later) to quantify compactness, and constructed maps of comparable or higher compactness compared to Hyattsville’s current Wards. We note that this metric has been used by other jurisdictions in their own redistricting efforts, including recently our neighbors in Takoma Park.
- **Wards must be drawn to provide fair and effective representation for all residents of the City, including racial, ethnic, and language minorities<sup>2</sup>. They should take in account existing infrastructural and natural boundaries. To the extent possible, they should preserve identifiable communities of interest.** We were guided in all the above considerations by our own experiences, by public outreach, and thanks to the expertise of and resources from Shakira Louimarre.
- **Wards most likely to be impacted by future development may be smaller by design in order to minimize impact of population growth on future redistricting.** One of our two proposed map concepts was developed to focus on this option.
- **Redistricting must be done in compliance with local, state, and federal laws, including the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965.** We fully believe we have done so and have no reason to suspect otherwise. In particular, Commission members received training on the Maryland Open Meetings Act and all activities of the Commission were conducted in compliance with this Act.

Further to the above, we were advised that the addresses of Council members should not be considered a factor in the redistricting process. We therefore did not discuss these (and, in many cases, chose to remain unaware of Council members’ addresses in order to avoid the possibility).

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<sup>1</sup> See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polsby%E2%80%93Popper\\_test](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polsby%E2%80%93Popper_test)

<sup>2</sup> We note this is the City’s wording and feel that “historically marginalized groups” would be a more appropriate term. We reproduce the original language here as this how the requirements were presented to us and recommend that wording is reconsidered before the next Redistricting Commission is convened.

## 4. Data sources and resources available

### 4.1 The 2020 US Census

Our primary data source for the redistricting process was the 2020 Census. This contains, on the “census block” level, the following pertinent information:

- Total population.
- Population breakdown by race into 7 categories: “White”, “Black or African American”, “American Indian or Alaska Native”, “Asian”, “Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander”, “Some Other Race” (here, “Other”), and “Two or More Races” (here, “Multiracial”).
- Population breakdown by ethnicity (“Hispanic” or “Non-Hispanic”).
- Total number of housing units. This is not broken down by type of housing (e.g. single family home, apartment, townhome, etc.).
- Number of vacant and occupied housing units.

Overall (rounded to the nearest 1%), responses to the racial question indicate Hyattsville is 25% White, 32% African American, 2% Native American, 4% Asian, <1% Native Hawaiian, 11% Multiracial, and 27% reporting Other. 39% identify as Hispanic, and 61% as Non-Hispanic.

We note that the responses to the racial and ethnicity questions are aggregated separately, i.e. we don’t have the self-reported racial breakdown of people who do or do not self-report as Hispanic vs. Non-Hispanic ethnicity. However, the correlation between the percentage of people (on a census block level in Hyattsville) identifying as Hispanic in the ethnicity question and the percentage identifying as “Other” in the racial question is high (0.899), suggesting that a significant proportion of Hyattsville’s Hispanic population self-reported their race as “Other”. This is a much stronger correlation than that between, for example, “Multiracial” percentage and “Hispanic” percentage (0.453) or than that between “White” percentage and “Hispanic” percentage (-0.031).

Figure 2 shows the most common racial self-identification within each census block, together with current Ward boundaries. Several facts are apparent from this map and Ward-level aggregates of the Census responses. The racial and ethnic makeup of Hyattsville is unevenly distributed throughout the City. Compared to Hyattsville as a whole, the populations of Wards 1 and 2 are disproportionately White, Ward 3 is disproportionately Black and Asian, and Wards 4 and 5 are disproportionately Hispanic.

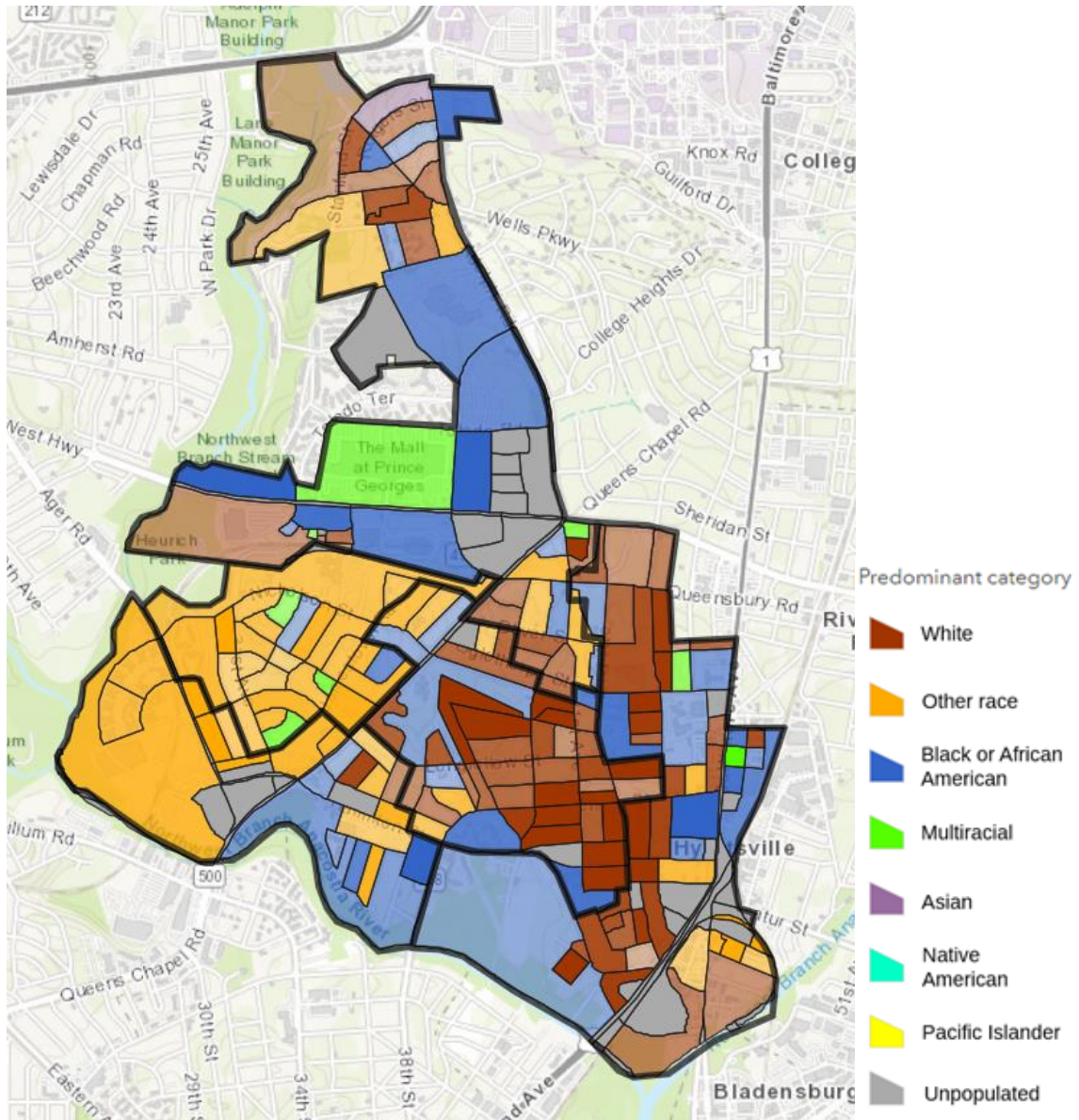


Figure 2. Map of Hyattsville showing Ward boundaries (thick black lines) and census block boundaries (thin black lines). Colors indicate the predominant response to the Census' question about respondents' self-described race within each census Block. The relative intensity of the color indicates the strength of that predominant response.

These demographic discrepancies do not pose an issue to the redistricting process and they also serve as one piece of guidance towards identifying communities of interest within the City. These differences represent, to an extent, historical geographic of patterns residence for various groups. Although it is not under the Commission's purview to identify or solve for the root causes of inequities related to existing patterns of clustering of racial groups, it is worthwhile to note that historical policies such as redlining<sup>3</sup> have contributed to this effect, and should be considered by City leadership in current and future policy making.

A second feature obvious from Figure 2 is that the size and shape of individual census blocks varies considerably across the city. As noted by the Census Bureau<sup>4</sup>, "*In a city, a census block looks like a city block bounded on all sides by streets. Census blocks in suburban and rural areas may be large, irregular, and bounded by a variety of features, such as roads, streams, and transmission lines.*" Within Hyattsville, many of these large census blocks are in comparatively undeveloped or recently developed areas. We suggest it would be helpful to the future if some of these irregular census blocks could be split into multiple blocks in advance of the next decadal Census; we believe such decisions are made by the US Census Bureau, but perhaps the City could advocate for this.

While are not required to use census blocks to define Ward boundaries, in practical terms it is difficult to avoid doing so. This is because we are required to use Census-enumerated population counts to assess Ward map compliance, and of course these data are unavailable to use on scales finer than individual census blocks. Drawing lines which break census blocks (as our recommended maps do) thus requires a credible way to make a sufficiently accurate estimate of the population at a sub-census block level. More detail on specific census blocks is provided later.

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<sup>3</sup> For an introductory discussion see, e.g., <https://www.npr.org/2017/05/03/526655831/a-forgotten-history-of-how-the-u-s-government-segregated-america>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/random-samplings/2011/07/what-are-census-blocks.html>

## 4.2 Limitations of the 2020 Census

The 2020 Census did not contain further socioeconomic data besides that described above. We also note that the political climate at the time the census was taken, combined with the COVID-19 pandemic, lead many to doubt the accuracy compared to previous Censuses<sup>5</sup>. We note that many localities have challenged the Census counts, and recounts are being carried out in some, with challenges to the tally being accepted until June 2023<sup>6</sup>. The Census Bureau believe that the total population count is reasonably accurate, but do note that, like previous Censuses, their own estimates:

*“... show that the 2020 Census undercounted the Black or African American population, the American Indian or Alaska Native population living on a reservation, the Hispanic or Latino population, and people who reported being of Some Other Race. On the other hand, the 2020 Census overcounted the Non-Hispanic White population and the Asian population. The Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander population was neither overcounted nor undercounted according to the findings.”<sup>7</sup>*

While we are unable to be definitive, common opinion is that this may have contributed to a comparative undercount of the populations of Ward 4 and Ward 5, which are more heavily Hispanic than other parts of Hyattsville.

Further, the Census Bureau intentionally switch some responses to different census blocks as part of their Disclosure Avoidance System to alleviate concerns about individuals being able to be identified by their survey responses, due to their requirement to keep personally identifiable information confidential for 72 years<sup>8</sup>. This data obscuration/differential privacy algorithm explicitly causes decreased accuracy about population totals (and demographics) at the census block level<sup>9</sup>, including creating implausible situations such as people recorded as living within rivers<sup>10</sup>, and it is recognized that this harms trust in and the utility of Census data for purposes such as redistricting<sup>11</sup>. Such a situation may have occurred with Hyattsville’s census block 1010 (containing the Mall at Prince George’s), which was recorded as having 18 residents, despite (to our knowledge) containing no residential units. It is also possible, however, that some or all of these were true responses from homeless residents of Hyattsville reporting addresses there.

We feel it is important to note this for completeness of this record and as an aid for the future when our work is reviewed. We again note that we were required, and met the requirement, of counting the population as it was enumerated by the Census, despite these concerns.

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<sup>5</sup> While widely reported, see e.g. <https://www.npr.org/2022/01/15/1073338121/2020-census-interference-trump> and links therein.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2022/04/04/the-census-missed-some-folks-these-cities-want-them-counted>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2022/2020-census-estimates-of-undercount-and-overcount.html>

<sup>8</sup> 92 Stat. 915; Public Law 95-416, available at [https://www.census.gov/history/pdf/NARA\\_Legislation.pdf](https://www.census.gov/history/pdf/NARA_Legislation.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> See <https://pad.human.cornell.edu/census2020/index.cfm#das> for some discussion in New York State

<sup>10</sup> For example, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/21/us/census-data-privacy-concerns.html>

<sup>11</sup> Boyd, Danah and Sarathy, Jayshree, Differential Perspectives: Epistemic Disconnects Surrounding the US Census Bureau’s Use of Differential Privacy (March 15, 2022). Harvard Data Science Review, available at [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=4077426](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4077426)



### 4.3 The 2017 American Community Survey (ACS)

Part of our tasking was to ensure “fair and effective representation” (Section 3), and Commission members felt that equity considerations are highly important and relevant to the redistricting process. We requested and obtained advice from Hyattsville’s Race & Equity Officer Shakira Louimarre on how we could ensure any proposed maps would not harm these goals. As a result of these discussions, in alignment with the Government Alliance on Racial Equity (GARE<sup>12</sup>)’s Equity Impact tool, we considered three key framing questions throughout the process:

- What are the equity impacts of a particular decision?
- Who will benefit from or be burdened by the decision?
- Are there strategies to mitigate unintended consequences?

This led us to consider both racial and ethnic demographics (as outlined above) but also to seek other resources by which we might identify marginalized or at-risk groups to ensure their representation is protected. In late August 2022 the Commission obtained a copy of the Vulnerable Populations Analysis Report prepared by Hyattsville’s Vulnerable Populations Working Group in late 2020. This drew upon socioeconomic data available in the 2017 ACS on a Census tract (collection of census blocks) level, and other coarser-scale data sources to attempt to identify vulnerable populations within Hyattsville.

While a highly valuable report, the Census tract scale of the data meant that it was of limited use in assessing to what extent adjustments to Ward boundaries would likely change the socioeconomic demographics of Hyattsville’s Wards. This is because the City of Hyattsville contains portions of 8 Census tracts (compared to over 100 census blocks), which encompass not only Hyattsville but also parts of its immediate neighbors. The Commission also noted that these data are approximately 5 years old and, particularly given ongoing development and the COVID-19 pandemic, socioeconomic demographics may have changed. The data are, however, useful for broader-scale understanding of existing disparities within Hyattsville. Figure 3 show the 8 Census Tracts in question, and Table 1 a summary of key metrics for each provided by that report. Both are reproduced from the aforementioned Vulnerable Populations Report.

At the time of writing it is unclear to us whether the source ACS or similar recent data are available on a census block scale. If the City are able to obtain such data we strongly recommend making it available during the ongoing Public Commentary period of the redistricting process, as well as making similar data sets available for future redistricting efforts. Such data would be highly valuable for addressing equity considerations and the concerns of residents.

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<sup>12</sup> See <https://www.racialequityalliance.org/>

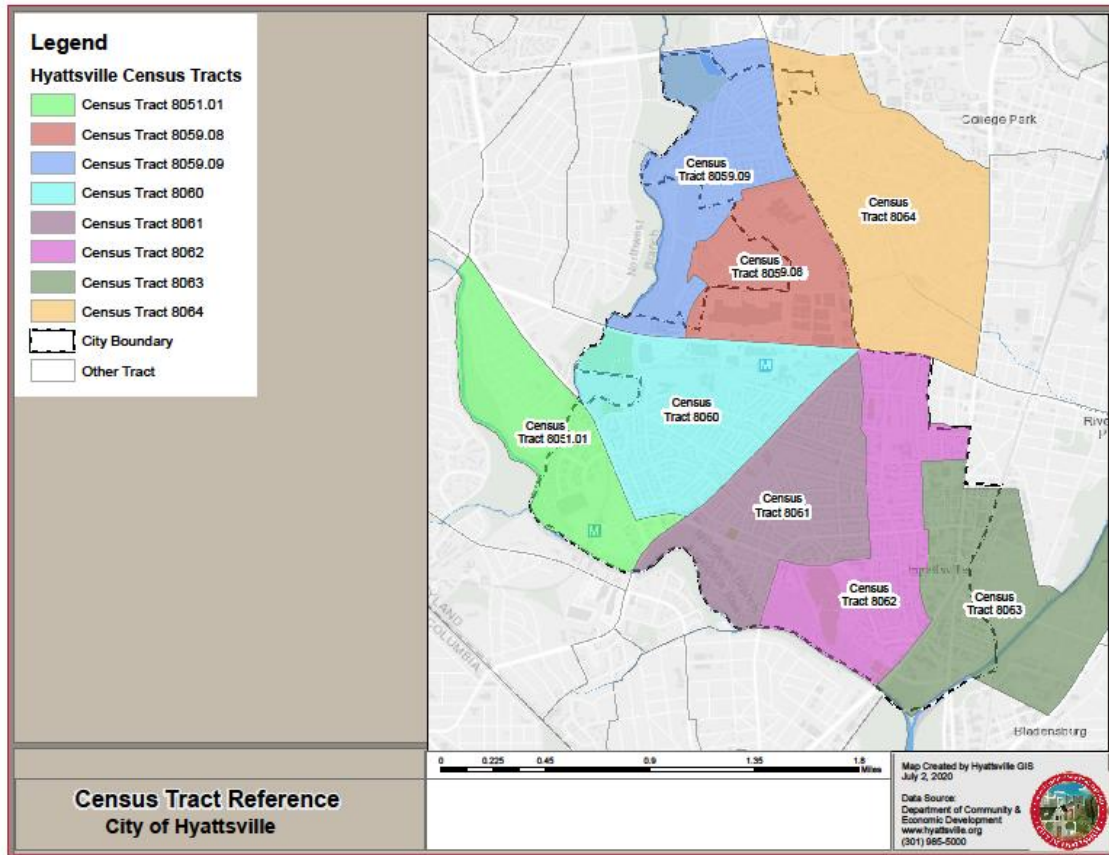


Figure 3. Census tracts including portions of Hyattsville in the 2017 ACS. Reproduced from the Appendix of the 2020 Vulnerable Populations Analysis Report.

Table 1. Percentage in each census tract of key indicators of vulnerability. Reproduced from Table 3 of the 2020 Vulnerable Populations Analysis Report, except rounded to the nearest 1%. Tract 8064 (Figure 3) was not considered due to limited overlap with Hyattsville.

Population (Age 65+)	Population (Age 65+)	Proportion of dependent adults (Age 65+)	Non-White population	Population with High School as highest educational achievement	Poverty (Age <18)	Poverty (Age 65+)	Households with no Vehicle
Mall at Prince George's / University Town Center (8059.09)	6%	8%	86%	22%	18%	12%	24%
Hyattsville Hills (8061)	11%	15%	61%	19%	30%	9%	8%
Hyattsville Crossing / PG Plaza Metro (8060)	7%	9%	83%	28%	8%	<1%	8%
Hyattsville Historic District (8062)	14%	22%	55%	18%	9%	16%	13%
West Hyattsville Metro / Kirkwood (8051.01)	5%	7%	84%	17%	21%	<1%	16%
Downtown Hyattsville/ Route One Corridor (8063)	7%	9%	61%	16%	7%	11%	4%
University Hills (8059.09)	8%	10%	83%	23%	20%	19%	21%

#### 4.4 Expected housing developments in the 2020-2030 timeframe

Several planned and ongoing housing developments are underway in Hyattsville. In July 2022, City Planner Taylor Robey provided the Commission with the locations and the expected number of housing units in each, which has allowed us to estimate where in the City is likely going to show the most population growth over the current decade. This allowed us to consider potential population changes when recommending maps, although we note again that all calculations for map compliance were based, as required, only on official 2020 Census data.

Figure 4 shows the locations of these developments, and Table 2 the total number of housing units (of all types) in each Ward (based on current boundaries). These reveal large variation in the locations of ongoing developments: 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.

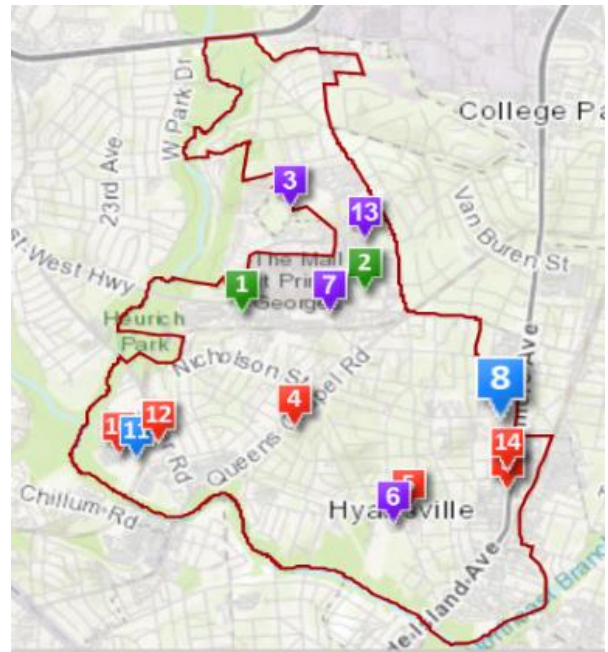


Figure 4. Locations of current planned housing developments within Hyattsville. Numbers denote individual developments; numbers and colors have no further specific meaning in this context. Image courtesy Taylor Robey, Hyattsville City Planner.

Table 2. 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
<b>Total new housing units</b>	325	83	1,876	0	1,153	3,437

## 5. Factors considered and public opinions

### 5.1 Background

As described in Section 3, “Wards must be drawn to provide fair and effective representation for all residents of the City, including racial, ethnic, and language minorities. They should take in account existing infrastructural and natural boundaries. To the extent possible, they should preserve identifiable communities of interest.” To achieve these aims, we drew on our own experiences as residents of Hyattsville, the available census and ACS data, the expertise of Hyattsville’s Race & Equity Officer Shakira Louimarre, and public outreach.

Historically excluded and marginalized groups have often had their power and representation diluted by dominant groups in society. We feel and guidance stipulates that equity and improving the lives of everyone in our city are important principles, and that redistricting should further these goals. Such excluded and marginalized group’s power has often been diluted by either “splitting” their population among multiple electoral districts (such that they are unable to gain sufficient representation for power anywhere) or “packing” them into a small number of districts (where they may win representation, but in a small number of districts where they are unable to influence wider-scale decision making). We consider our knowledge of Hyattsville’s demographics and existing communities of interest, as well as the Polsby-Popper compactness metric, as ways we can avoid such gerrymandering and anti-equity outcomes. See also the discussion in Section 4.3.

Other communities of interest we felt would benefit by being not split between different Wards include individual homeowner associations (HOAs) and condominium developments, as well as Hyattsville’s portion of the Gateway Arts District. We note that public school attendance in Hyattsville is not tied to Ward residency.

### 5.2 The Polsby-Popper compactness metric

The “compactness” requirement in the redistricting process does not have a strict formal definition. In a general sense, one shape may be more compact than another if it is “less wiggly” or “cleaner”. In essence, these are statements relating the exterior boundary (perimeter) of a shape to its interior contents (area). Many mathematical formulae can be used to express compactness, and are or have been considered to quantify the compactness of proposed maps as part of redistricting efforts<sup>13</sup>.

The Polsby-Popper score<sup>14</sup> is one possible metric that provides a simple (does not involve calculations beyond middle school students; can be done on a calculator), unambiguous (there

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<sup>13</sup> Rick Gillman (2002) Geometry and Gerrymandering, Math Horizons, 10:1, 10-12, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10724117.2002.11974602> Chair Sayer obtained a copy of this paper from Prof. Gillman, which he will provide to interested parties.

<sup>14</sup> See again [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polsby%E2%80%93Popper\\_test](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polsby%E2%80%93Popper_test) or the above document by Rick Gillman.

is one definite answer) of compactness which is often considered in redistricting including, recently, by our neighbors in Takoma Park<sup>15</sup>.

The underlying principle is to compare the area of a shape (the amount of “inside”) to square of the perimeter of a shape (the amount of “outside”), and normalize this to account for the ratio ( $4\pi$ , where  $\pi$  is a number approximately equal to 3.14) of these quantities for a circle. A circle is considered the most compact of all possible flat shapes. A Polsby-Popper (PP) score for any given two-dimensional shape can then be calculated as:

$$PP = \frac{4\pi A}{P^2}$$

*Equation 1: the Polsby-Popper (PP) calculation.  
A is the area of the shape and P is its perimeter.*

The maximum possible PP score is 1 (for a circle), and the minimum is 0 (for an infinitely wiggly shape). Higher PP scores mean a more compact shape. As an example, Figure 5 shows PP scores for some sample shapes. We note that PP scores for maps are often in the low to middle range (and lower than the examples here) due to unavoidable factors like the shape of a city’s outlines and thoroughfares.



Shape	Circle	Square	Equilateral triangle	Tetris “L”
Side length	3 (radius)	3	3	4x1 and 1x1
Area	28.3	9	3.9	5
Perimeter	18.8	12	9	11
PP score	1	0.79	0.60	0.52

Figure 5. Polsby-Popper (PP) compactness scores for various example shapes.

In practice, GIS Shapefiles of current and proposed Wards were prepared by Hyattsville GIS Technician Sekour Mason. From these, area and perimeter can be easily obtained by loading into freely-available software such as Google Earth (import the Shapefile, select the shape in question, and navigate right-click -> Properties -> Measurements).

<sup>15</sup> <https://takomaparkmd.gov/initiatives/project-directory/redistricting/>

### 5.3 Public outreach efforts

Throughout the process, we have sought the opinion of residents of Hyattsville through a number of avenues, and we plan to continue to do so through the rest of the process until final maps are approved and implemented. Specific ways we have sought public opinion have been:

- Holding public meetings compliant with the Maryland Open Meetings Act, in which we have invited members of the public present to share their thoughts on what we are discussing. Several community members took this opportunity and we are grateful for their time and inputs. These meetings and agendas were publicized on the City website and email lists, and minutes were recorded, approved, and distributed as required. One meeting was in person at the City building and the rest to date have been virtual (held over Zoom). Most have been held during weekday evenings, reflecting Commission members' work and parenting schedules. We also felt that virtual and evening meetings were more likely to offer interested residents the opportunity to participate.
- Attendance at City events including the Summer Jam and Back to School Jam. We expect to attend further events such as the upcoming Zombie Run.
- Use of the Citizen Lab platform (redistricting-specific page at <https://hyattsville.citizenlab.co/en/projects/redistricting>), set up by Communications Manager Cindy Zork for redistricting and future Hyattsville outreach needs. Our written outreach materials have included a written link and QR code to this Citizen Lab platform.
- Talking with our neighbors in person, through neighborhood email listservs, and at block parties.
- Distributing flyers and notices via multiple avenues. These include flyers distributed by the city's Department of Public Works during regular trash pickup, sent to apartment buildings, and to clergy. Notices have been and will be posted in the Hyattsville Report and Hyattsville Life & Times circulars. We are also understanding rules and considering the best and cost-effective ways to reach people through Hyattsville's schools, with the understanding that some students at Hyattsville schools may not live in Hyattsville, and vice-versa.

We note that our written outreach materials have been available in both English and Spanish. We acknowledge that due to time constraints this report is only available in English and would encourage a Spanish translation if possible. Following the presentation of these candidate maps to Council, we plan to continue these outreach efforts with increased focus on the parts of the City most likely to change Wards as a result of redistricting.

More broadly, as a group we all acknowledged that it is especially critical to engage communities of color and those for whom English is a second language. Due to the historical reality of the role of government in creating and maintaining racial inequities, it is unsurprising that communities of color do not always have much trust in government (even in a comparatively diverse and progressive location such as Hyattsville). In addition, there is a likelihood many residents face other barriers such as language, perception of being welcome, lack of public transportation, or childcare. With additional time the group could have an opportunity to do more targeted outreach and engagement with marginalized communities for even more in-depth input.

## 5.4 Themes in public comments

Here we organize key public comments received (in person, via email, and via CitizenLab) by theme. These have guided our thinking and evolution of considered maps. Quotes are exact where possible, and paraphrased or edited for grammar otherwise, dependent on whether they were originally written or spoken verbally and written down by the Commission shortly after.

### **On the redistricting process itself**

People tend to have strong and often negative associations with the word “redistricting”. This is likely due to higher-level (county, state) redistricting efforts going on at a similar time which can be partisan, political, and highly polarizing in nature. As a result many people at outreach events (coming in essentially without prior expectation as they encountered us) initially assumed we were there to talk about county/state redistricting, worked either for the city or regional/national politicians, were politicians ourselves, or were otherwise somehow removed from immediate local concerns. The word “redistricting” immediately sends many peoples’ minds to Gerrymandering and partisan politics, which we feel is an unfortunate association that took some explanation to overcome. We therefore recommend that the City does not use this term the next time Ward boundaries need to be redrawn as it causes unnecessary confusion and skepticism. A possible alternative could be “City Council Ward boundary redrawing” or similar.

Many people were aware of their local member of Congress; some were aware of their PG County Council representative. This was probably partially due to ongoing primary elections for these positions at the same time as the Ward redistricting process. Greater clarity might be achieved by convening the Redistricting Commission at a time without other ongoing elections.

A substantial fraction of people are unaware of which Ward they live in, of who their Council members are, or what their Ward means to their daily lives. Many said it didn’t really matter which Ward they were in as all of Hyattsville is perceived to be progressive, is diverse, and it is a small city. However, others felt it did matter and that certain parts of the city and in particular commercial areas such as parks were associated with specific Wards. Comments such as “*To me, Ward 1 is the downtown area and Ward 2 is the historic district*” were common (even if not exact).

### **On the scale of redistricting**

We were interested in the public’s opinion on how small or large the changes to Ward boundaries ought to be as part of the redistricting process. Public opinion was fairly split on this, especially after individuals were informed about locations and scales of ongoing housing developments, with passionate arguments on both sides of the debate. This motivated the differences between the two main maps we are proposing.



The group preferring small changes felt that moving people around decreased their agency and made them feel like they were not understood or cared about by those in power (again, Redistricting Commission members were sometimes incorrectly assumed to be City employees or politicians in some of the below comments). Comments offered include *“You want to move us around from Ward to Ward like a merry-go-round”*; *“Our elected representatives should not be constantly swapped out every 10 years (unless we vote them out)”*; *“Why do you work so hard to keep the Arts District together yet you move us around like toys?”*; *“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 obviously strong concerns that can affect the perceived legitimacy and credibility of the process and, by extension, the City governance in the minds of some residents. Ward 2 residents noted that if their Ward changes following redistricting, they will have voted for someone in October 2022 only to have their representative change a few months later.

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”*. Some further advocated for considering only voting age (16+) population, although we made clear that not only do we not have that information but also that we are required to consider total population.

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. Both camps, however, did agree that the current Ward boundaries should be a starting point, as opposed to starting completely from scratch, as large neighborhoods within Wards often had their own distinct character and sense of community. Further, while we understand we are not legally required to recommend a 5-Ward map, public opinion seemed to be that continuing a 5-Ward system was sensible. We are also aware of a previous referendum of Hyattsville residents whose result came down in favor of a 5-Ward system with two Council members for each. As a result our considered maps were all based on five Wards.

### **On how Ward boundaries should be constructed**

Many said *“Wards should reflect our neighborhoods”* and we *“shouldn’t try to even out the demographic differences across the city, it’s more important to keep existing communities together”*. These public sentiments were in general agreement with the requirements presented to us by Council.

Many people said that boundaries should be 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, we noted that boundaries with straighter lines were described as *“seeming fairer”* by residents.

Major roads were regarded by many as sensible places to draw boundaries: *“You often do feel a sense of different neighborhoods when you cross Queen’s Chapel”*. A few, however, disagreed: *“When you section off this city by roadways like Queen’s Chapel Road you also*

divide the citizens and their needs to “us vs. them” and noted “there is already a great divide in amenities in this city, most of which are on the East side of Queen’s Chapel Road”. Using East-West Highway as a dividing line was less contentious.

In contrast to major roads, residential streets were often seen as poor places to draw boundaries because “they have common impacts on both slides” and “I should be in the same Ward as my neighbors beside me and across the street”. Some suggested drawing boundaries behind houses rather than along roads. However, in many places this is impractical because a block has houses on all four sides (so any line drawn would divide some residents from neighbors). Further, as discussed earlier, as our population data are only available at census block level (which typically does involve boundaries along streets) any subdivision behind homes mean population counts become estimates rather than exact and potentially less defensible.

One conclusion from comments on this theme is that non-residential areas such as parks, commercial areas, or empty lots could be good candidates for boundaries as they decrease the number of residents in different Wards from their neighbors. It is, however, impossible to avoid this entirely.

### **Commentary on specific locations**

During the process we received a lot of opinion about specific locations within the city, which informed our final proposed maps:

- Given Ward 3’s population is too large for its current boundaries to be compliant, there were two obvious options for changing its southern boundary. People in general preferred moving the portion East of Queen’s Chapel Rd into Wards 1 and/or 2 because “it doesn’t really fit or connect with the rest of Ward 3”. People felt that moving the portion West of Queen’s Chapel Rd into Ward 4 made less sense because “you can’t walk from there into the rest of Ward 4 without going the long way around” and “it’s not that connected to Ward 4”.
- The area bounded by 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Hamilton St, and Driskell Park feels like an “orphan” or “misfit” in Ward 1 because it is physically separated from the rest of Ward 1 by Driskell Park. Residents of that part of the city (which includes single family homes and the Park Place Condominiums) expressed that being in Ward 5 would make more sense.
- The volunteer fire house is in a cutout of Ward 4 but the buildings storing their vehicles and equipment next door are in Ward 3. People noted it would make more sense for them all to be in the same Ward.
- Residents at the Back to School Jam event (at Hyatt Park, near the border of Wards 2 and 5) expressed that the boundary “felt arbitrary and I don’t really know where it is”.
- Several people expressed that Ward 4 “should go further South than it does”, though proposals to that end were often not workable as they resulted in Ward 5 becoming fragmented.

## 6. Maps developed, and map recommendations

City GIS Technician Sekour Mason developed an interactive web tool where these maps and relevant Census data can be visualized. This is available at: <https://arcg.is/OXfqP>

### 6.1 Initial “Equal Populations” concept

After initially being provided with the Census data, the Commission felt that a reasonable first step would be to try to take the current Ward boundaries and adjust them until a map was reached that balanced the 2020 Census populations as closely as possible. This would allow us to get a better feel for how large population and demographic shifts would occur when individual census blocks were moved and allowed us to develop a workflow for examining the data and maps and working with one another.

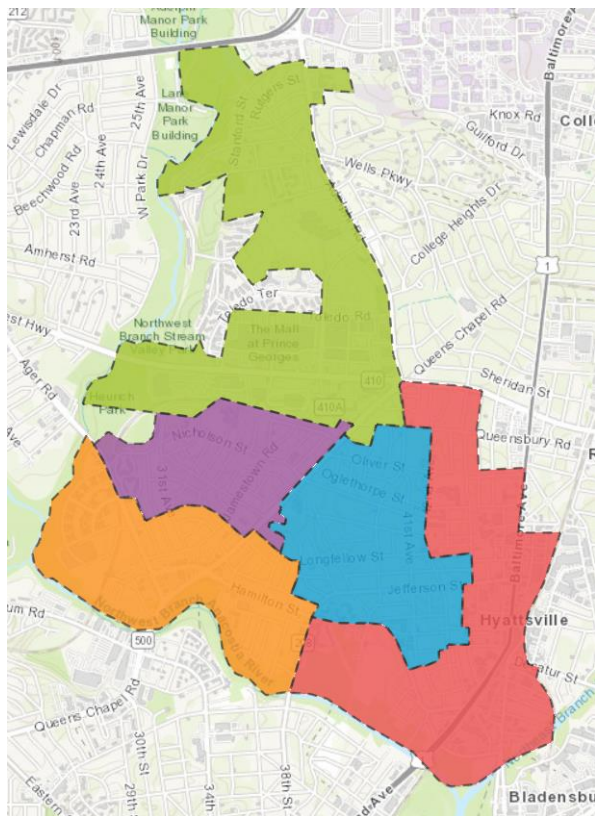


Figure 6. The Equal Populations concept map.  
Colors show Wards 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

We called this map concept “Equal Populations” and this was the first example map we took with us to outreach events and put on the Citizen Lab platform. It is shown in Figure 6. While it quickly became apparent that this was not a map we would likely endorse, it served its purposes as a way for us to get familiar with the data and as a talking point for initial discussions with Hyattsville residents.

Specifically, these early discussions gave a lot of opinions about how best to draw lines, where natural places to draw boundaries were (and where should not be split), and how to best go about making Ward 3 smaller. It also gave a clear message from residents that trying to find an exact balance of populations based on the 2020 Census didn’t serve either the goal of minimal disruption to current Wards or of effectively accounting for expected housing development through the decade to come.

## 6.2 Other discussed and discarded map concepts

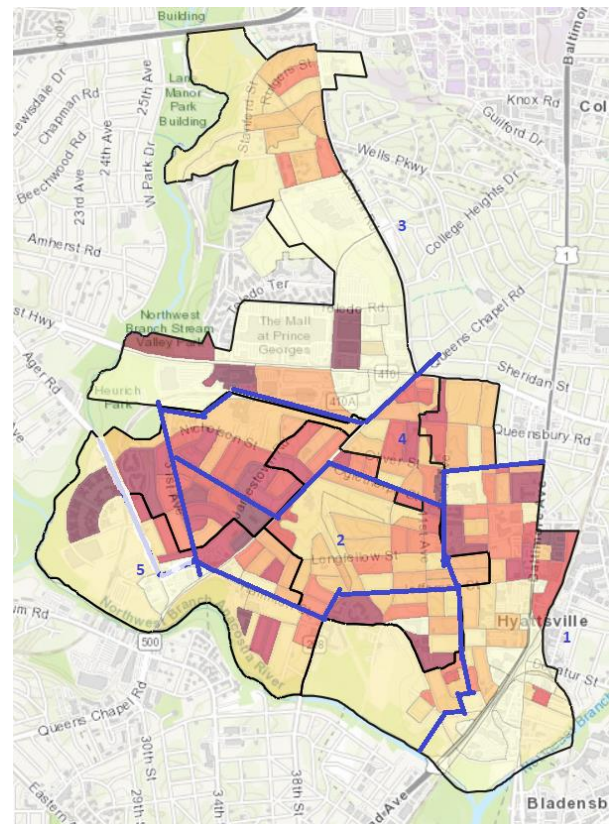
Through Summer 2022 at our public meetings we discussed various other map concepts and ultimately discarded them when viewing through the lens of the requirements and/or the public comments we had received.

One pair of concepts included taking the “Equal Populations” concept (with refinements) and attempting to account for future housing development by expanding Ward 4 either North (to East-West Highway) or South to Ager Road. The rationale here was that Ward 4 had no currently expected new housing development while Wards 3 and 5 have a significant amount (see Table 2). However, such changes resulted in the new Ward 4 being too populous and/or Wards 3 or 5 being too low in population; in the latter case, there were also concerns about Ward 5 becoming too fragmented and losing its sense of community. These two map concepts are available at the above url for the interested reader.

Another concept was to attempt to reduce the current perceived divide between East and West Hyattsville. The idea was to achieve this by aligning Wards 1, 2, and 4 more strongly along an East-West axis as opposed to a North-South axis. This concept would have likely also made the demographics of these individual Wards more similar to the city as a whole.

An initial mockup in this direction is shown in Figure 7. This concept was abandoned, however, as it seemed impossible to draw boundaries without splitting existing communities of interest, and in various mockups Ward 5 also often ended split into two separate nodes.

After discussion as a group we also felt that such a change would be likely to hinder rather than help equity concerns. It would also cause more significant disruption to the residents of all of Hyattsville’s Wards. For these reasons, we decided not to pursue maps along this concept. We note that the specific example in Figure 7 was abandoned before getting to the point of verifying whether population totals would be compliant.



*Figure 7. An initial concept map which would attempt to define a primarily East-West direction for Wards 1, 2, and 4. Approximate boundaries and Ward numbers are shown in blue. The underlying map is relative population density (pale is fewer, red and purple progressively higher).*

### 6.3 Final “Minimal Adjustments” and “Growth Conscious” concepts

All of this deliberation led to two map concepts which, at our September 8 meeting, we voted to endorse and present to Council. Each of these maps draws from one of the two competing views on the appropriate scale of redistricting efforts. Many changes are common to both maps as they were broadly viewed by us and members of the public as reasonable under both concepts. These two map concepts are also available at the url at the start of this section for further exploration, and we intend to add them to the Citizen Lab portal following our presentation to Council.

The first concept we endorse, “Minimal Adjustments”, is shown in Figure 8. This attempts to achieve compliant Ward maps with some accounting for future growth while avoiding too many residents finding themselves in a different Ward. This map will therefore be less disruptive to current residents but will likely mean more drastic changes to Hyattsville’s Ward boundaries are necessary following the next 2030 Census/redistricting cycle, and development in Wards 3 and 5 means that the populations are likely to increase fastest (and therefore relative representation on Council be diluted) over the decade. 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 38<sup>th</sup> Ave moved into Ward 5. This involves splitting census block 2009 between two Wards along the western boundary of Diskell Park.
- The Volunteer Fire Department buildings are unified into Ward 3. This involves spitting off the north-eastern tip of census block 1015, which is irregularly shaped and covers the northern edge of Ward 4.

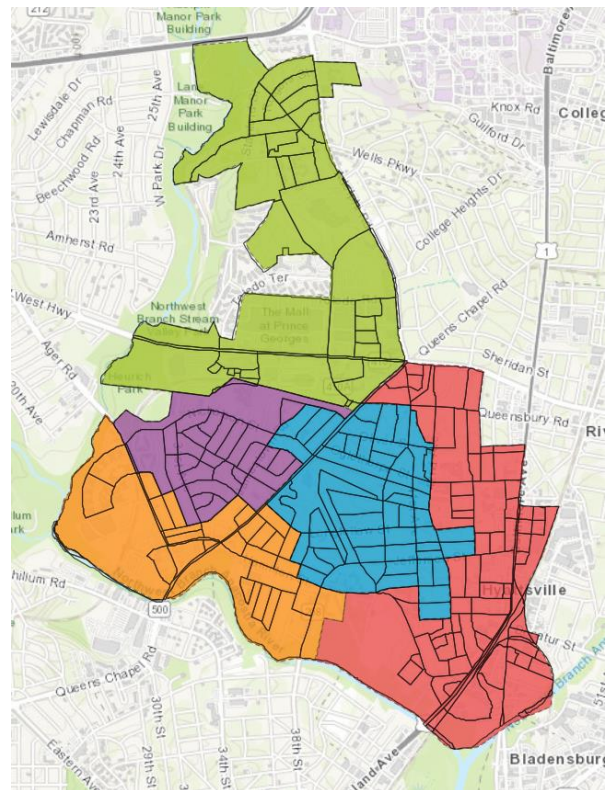


Figure 8. The Minimal Adjustments concept map. Colors show Wards 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

The second concept we endorse, “Growth Conscious”, is shown in Figure 9. This takes many of the same changes to current boundaries as Minimal Adjustments but further adjusts Wards 1, 2, and 4 to increase the populations of 2 and 4 (decreasing that of Ward 1) in order that coming developments will keep Ward populations and thus residents’ representation on Council more balanced with new housing through the coming decade. It replaces these boundaries along Ward 2 with straighter lines, which increases public perceptions of fairness. An earlier iteration of this map was shown at the Back to School Jam event in August 2022 and received positive public opinion. 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 more current Hyattsville residents, which is more disruptive. This may be a particular concern for residents of Ward 2 given the upcoming election for a Ward 2 seat on City Council, as residents may either vote for someone and find themselves moved, or conversely be moved into Ward 2 without having had the opportunity to vote for a representative. 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 Hamilton St, 42<sup>nd</sup> Ave, and Queensbury Rd. Note 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 previously been moved into Ward 2 in the previous redistricting cycle.
- Houses and Park Place Condominiums south-east of Hamilton St and 38<sup>th</sup> Ave moved into Ward 5. This involves splitting census block 2009 between two Wards along the western boundary of Driskell Park.
- The Volunteer Fire Department buildings are unified into Ward 3. This involves spitting off the north-eastern tip of Census Block 1015, which is irregularly shaped and covers the northern edge of Ward 4.

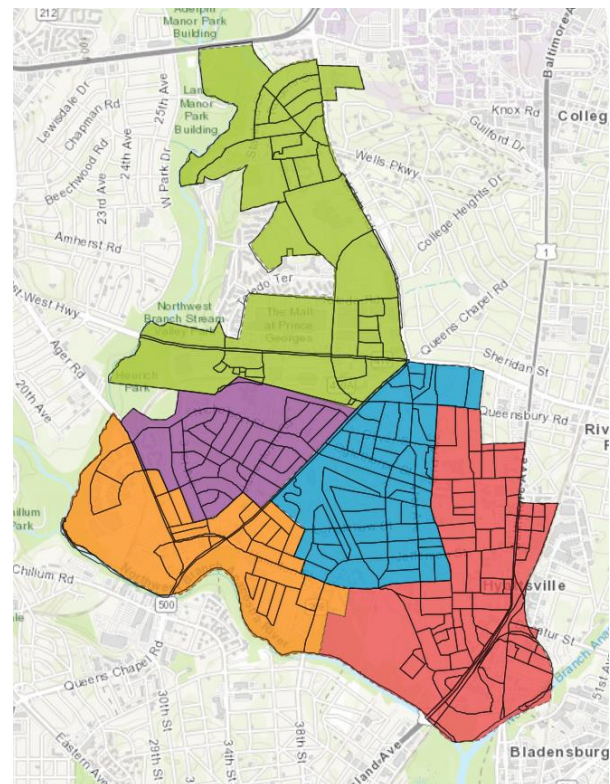


Figure 9. The Growth Conscious concept map. Colors show Wards 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5

Wards 3 and 5 are identical within both map concepts as these were seen as the most fair and logical ways to adjust these Wards. The differences are in the boundary of Ward 2 with other Wards.

Both maps insert Ward boundaries within individual census blocks. For census block 1015 (uniting the fire house with its outbuildings in Ward 3) this should not affect population estimates as to our best knowledge the Fire House should not have permanent residents recorded by the Census. If it does, the number is likely to be small and would not affect the viability of these maps with respect to population requirements.

The case of census block 2009, containing Driskell Park, is more complicated. The Census records this as having 176 housing units total, of which 167 were occupied. Visual examination (by walking the streets) suggests 15 of these units are homes along the eastern side of 38<sup>th</sup> Ave; 45 homes across the streets on the eastern side of Driskell Park, and consequently 116 units in Park Place Condominiums. Park Place and the 38<sup>th</sup> Ave houses would move into Ward 5 under these maps. The Census records the population of census block 2009 as 370 people, for an average of  $370/176=2.1$  people per housing unit (as we have no breakdown by type or where the unoccupied units were). This implies 95 people would be in the part of this Census Block remaining in Ward 1, and 275 in the part of the census block moving to Ward 5. We note again the previously-discussed intentional data obscuration by the Census Bureau that limits the accuracy of data at a census block scale. For this particular case, an error of order 100 people in estimating this split (for the Growth Conscious map) or 20 (for Minimal Adjustments) would still result in Ward populations compliant with redistricting requirements. We feel that our estimate of the population split is fair and, given the uncertainties with the Census data, acceptable.

#### 6.4 Summary Statistics

Table 3 shows the populations of the current Wards, together with the populations under the proposed Minimal Adjustments and Growth Conscious maps. These show that both proposed map scenarios are compliant with the permissible range of 3,814 to 4,661 people per Ward.

*Table 3. 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.*

<b>Map</b>	<b>Ward 1</b>	<b>Ward 2</b>	<b>Ward 3</b>	<b>Ward 4</b>	<b>Ward 5</b>
Current	4376	3859	<b>5201</b>	4026	<b>3725</b>
Minimal Adjustments	4640	4466	4055	4026	4000
Growth Conscious	4157	4504	4055	4471	4000

Tables 4, 5, and 6 report the racial and ethnic breakdowns of the Wards under each of the respective scenarios. These show that the underlying racial and ethnic demographics are similar under the different maps (although there are changes, Wards 1 and 2 remain more White, Ward 3 more Black and Asian, and Wards 4 and 5 more Hispanic than Hyattsville as a whole).

*Table 4. Ward racial and ethnic breakdowns based on 2020 Census data for the current Wards. Numbers rounded to the nearest 1%. Numbers in bold is where a response is significantly higher than the City-wide average.*

<b>Ward</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
% White	<b>38</b>	<b>39</b>	23	12	11
% Black or African American	32	27	<b>45</b>	21	28
% American Indian or Alaska Native	1	1	1	2	2
% Asian	3	2	<b>7</b>	3	2
% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1
% Other	14	19	14	<b>48</b>	<b>46</b>
% Multiracial	11	11	10	<b>14</b>	10
% Hispanic (ethnicity)	23	31	22	<b>65</b>	<b>60</b>

*Table 5. Ward racial and ethnic breakdowns based on 2020 Census data for the proposed Minimal Adjustments Ward map. Numbers rounded to the nearest 1%. Numbers in bold is where a response is significantly higher than the City-wide average.*

<b>Ward</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
% White	<b>36</b>	<b>38</b>	21	12	11
% Black or African American	34	25	<b>51</b>	21	28
% American Indian or Alaska Native	1	2	1	2	2
% Asian	3	2	<b>8</b>	3	2
% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1
% Other	15	21	9	<b>48</b>	<b>46</b>
% Multiracial	11	12	9	<b>14</b>	10
% Hispanic (ethnicity)	24	33	17	<b>65</b>	<b>60</b>

*Table 6. Ward racial and ethnic breakdowns based on 2020 Census data for the proposed Growth Conscious Ward map. Numbers rounded to the nearest 1%. Numbers in bold is where a response is significantly higher than the City-wide average.*

<b>Ward</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
% White	<b>39</b>	<b>38</b>	21	12	11
% Black or African American	34	25	<b>51</b>	23	28
% American Indian or Alaska Native	1	1	1	4	2
% Asian	3	3	<b>8</b>	4	2
% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1
% Other	13	20	9	<b>47</b>	<b>46</b>
% Multiracial	10	12	9	<b>14</b>	10
% Hispanic (ethnicity)	22	31	17	<b>64</b>	<b>60</b>



Table 7 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. 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 6. Polsby-Popper (PP) compactness scores for the current Wards, together with the proposed Minimal Adjustments and Growth Conscious Wards.*

<b>Map</b>	<b>Ward 1</b>	<b>Ward 2</b>	<b>Ward 3</b>	<b>Ward 4</b>	<b>Ward 5</b>	<b>Average</b>
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	0.44	0.56	0.20	0.56	0.37	0.40

## 7. Loose ends and thoughts for the next redistricting process

We feel we have presented two viable, reasonable, and compliant map options for Council to consider as part of the redistricting process. We stand by them and look forward to further discussion, outreach, and any further revision as may be necessary. Ultimately the decision for Council is to what extent to account for Hyattsville's ongoing population growth now vs. in the future. That said, there are several points that time constraints prohibited us from considering, and we have several thoughts on how this process could be conducted during the next redistricting cycle.

- Under the Minimal Adjustments map, the census block 1015 (along the northern boundary of Ward 4) contains a “tongue” of houses on Oliver St West of Jamestown Rd currently (and under this map) within Ward 4, bounded immediately to the South by an outcrop of Ward 2. If Council chooses to adopt this map, they may consider moving these (approximately 16) homes into Ward 2. We did not in the version presented here (in favor of moving as few people as necessary from their current Wards), but this is a comparatively small adjustment which would fit with some Hyattsville residents' expressed preferences of not having residential roads divide homes. Outreach directly to these residents would be useful to gauge opinion; the commission have not yet had the time to do so.
- The northern end of census block 2004 (East of Ager Rd, bounded by Lancer Dr and 29<sup>th</sup> Ave) contains one building that is part of the North Pointe Apartments. This block is currently and under both proposed scenarios within Ward 5. The rest of this development is in census block 2001, immediately to the North in Ward 4. Council may consider moving this one building into Ward 4 to unify the Apartments; this would, however, mean splitting census block 2004 and as yet the Commission have been able to determine whether or not the resulting population decrease would make Ward 5's population too low to be compliant. We suggest outreach and obtaining if possible an accurate count of the population of this building.
- Overall, while happy with the maps, we felt that the Commission could have benefited from being convened a month or so earlier to give more time for public outreach on our proposals before presenting these maps to Council. This is particularly relevant as an equity concern in order to obtain sufficient feedback from historically marginalized groups. Gathering data takes time, and the (important) requirements surrounding the Open Meetings Act puts an immediate limitation on how often we can meet (even before accounting for members' personal and professional commitments). Further, redistricting in the future would benefit from being scheduled at a time without significant other ongoing elections as this led to some public confusion.
- As noted earlier, we feel the term “redistricting” has strong negative connotations for many people and hinders outreach efforts. We feel the term is unnecessary in the context of drawing City Council Ward boundaries.
- Finally, if possible, revisions to the census blocks comprising Hyattsville (and potentially the Census Tracts) would be helpful in order that future Redistricting Commissions have prompt access to accurate, detailed data at fine spatial scales from future decadal and socioeconomic Censuses.