

2013 Transforming Local Government Conference
City of Dallas Redistricting Case Study Proposal



City of Dallas

Title: Redistricting for the 21st Century

Category: Community Building

Jurisdiction: City of Dallas

City Manager Name: Mary K. Suhm

PROJECT LEADER/PRESENTER

Yasmin Barnes Tolliver
Redistricting Project Manager
Current: *Assistant Director*
Human Resources
yasmin.tolliver@dallascityhall.com
Dallas City Hall
1500 Marilla Street 6AN
Dallas, TX 75201

Presentation Team Members

Lindsay Kramer
Demographer
Strategic Customer Service
lindsay.kramer@dallascityhall.com
Dallas City Hall
1500 Marilla Street 7AN
Dallas, TX 75201

Peter Bratt
Redistricting Coordinator
Intergovernmental Services
peter.bratt@dallascityhall.com
Dallas City Hall
1500 Marilla Street 4BN
Dallas, TX 75201

Would you like the application to be considered for an Innovation Award (eligible to Alliance member jurisdictions only)? **Yes**

Would you like the application to be considered for our Rapid Fire Session? **Yes**

SYNOPSIS

Project Intent

Every ten years, various levels of government begin the redistricting process based on the results from the most recent decennial census data. The City of Dallas's preparation for the redistricting process began earlier than 2011. Since redistricting is a highly visible and an often contentious endeavor, managing this process required high-level planning and preparation for every phase, particularly before the census data was released. The City of Dallas's redistricting process offers guidance to other units of government embarking in the redistricting process in the future.

Since 1991, the Dallas City Charter requires the creation of a Redistricting Commission every ten years following the completion of the decennial census. Each member of the Dallas City Council appoints a member of Redistricting Commission, with the Mayor appointing the chair (with approval from City Council). The fifteen members of the Redistricting Commission hold sessions, including public hearings, to develop, prepare, and recommend a districting plan that proposes the respective boundaries of the fourteen districts comprising of the Dallas City Council. Upon the completion of the Redistricting Commission's work, the recommended districting plan is sent to the Mayor, who then presents the plan to the City Council. The City Council has 45 days to adopt or modify the plan, which is then forwarded to the Department of Justice for preclearance in accordance with the Voting Rights Act.

The Redistricting Commission began meeting in February 2011, but preparations for the commission's work by the Coordinators began much earlier. In December 2010, City Staff began working developing a website for the Commission, as well as planning for a team-building retreat for Staff and Commissioners. In January 2011, staff created a computer lab with five work stations which had ArcGIS mapping software to assist with the Commissioners' work. Before the Commission's work began, the website, which displayed all meetings videos, reports, and other pertinent documents, went live.

Once the commission meetings commenced in February 2011, Staff's workload assumed a rhythm of preparing materials for each meeting, ensuring that the Commissioners received their packets prior to the meeting, and working to make the meetings transparent and accessible to the general public. Since the Redistricting Commission's work would ultimately conclude with a filing of the proposed plan for preclearance with the Department of Justice, Staff gathered all documents submitted by commission members and the public for proper record keeping. Staff also helped to train commission members with using computer mapping software in March 2011, and installed software on Commissioners' computers.

The first major assignment of the Redistricting Commission was to develop legal guidelines for the redistricting process. In developing guidelines for the process, it was critical that the members of the Redistricting Commission be educated concerning the basic constitutional principles and laws governing the process. Staff began this process by providing a legal briefing and giving them resources, including *A Citizen's Guide to Redistricting* by Justin Levitt and *The Impact of Redistricting in Your Community, A Guide to Redistricting* by the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, Inc. A glossary of redistricting terms was developed at the request of the Commission. Through three work sessions, the members of the Commission learned about redistricting case law, discussed the issues that were most important in Dallas, and reworked the guidelines so that the Commission understood and accepted these standards, voting unanimously to approve the guidelines on March 8, 2011. The guidelines were then sent to the City Council, where they were briefed and again received unanimous approval that these are the guidelines to be used throughout the process. The guidelines were posted on the Redistricting Commission's website and made a part of the required documents that plan submitters needed to sign off when presenting a proposed map for the City.

Following the adoption of redistricting guidelines for the Commission's work, beginning in April 2011, Staff worked with City Council, Commission members, and the general public to select locations and dates for the Redistricting Commission to hold public hearings. Ten public hearings were held between April 26, 2011 and May 24, 2011, and were attended by 570 people, of whom 125 gave public testimony. For each public hearing, Staff provided setup assistance, greeted and properly signed the public in, prepared maps

2013 Transforming Local Government Conference City of Dallas Redistricting Case Study Proposal

and demographic data for presentation, collected documents submitted by speakers to the Commission, and cleaned up the venue following the conclusion of each hearing.

Upon the conclusion of the public hearings, members of the public and the Commission began submitting proposed redistricting plans for consideration. As a part of insuring a transparent and open redistricting process, the City created a variety of opportunities for the public to be involved in creating their own redistricting plan. The general public had access to three options to create their plans: 1) the City Hall computer lab, 2) the Central Library computer terminals and 3) a web-based mapping application, while the Redistricting Commission had access to a fourth option of having the software installed on a personal computer. The various platform options provided flexibility to the public and the Commission as to where and when they wanted to work on their plans.

Administering all of these programs required close coordination with the City's technical staff, particularly during start-up. The project staff worked closely with City of Dallas GIS managers to provide training to Staff and the Commission, deal with technical issues with the software during the process, and create the web-based redistricting application. The project staff also developed an instruction guide, data dictionary, and demographic maps to assist the public in utilizing the software. The instruction guide provided directions on the basic functionality of the redistricting software for the public when Staff might not be available to assist. These were provided in both English and Spanish. A data dictionary was provided to identify all the variables that were visible in the redistricting software. The project also maintained transparency relating to the data that was used, and provided a copy of the shapefile with the City's redistricting data on the website for download.

The majority of the participants drawing maps utilized the web-based redistricting software which also presented challenges in communicating directly with participants. The public was allowed to sign-up, log-in, and submit entire plans electronically without any required interaction with project staff. This created the greatest flexibility for the public, but made it important to maintain open communication with program participants. The Staff achieved this through the provision of notice of receipt for every email that was received, and ensuring that a direct response to the email was provided promptly. The Staff also maintained communication through reminders of important deadlines, links to online resources, and the creation of draft maps for participants as they were working on their plans.

Staff assisted Commissioners and the public with using software in the Redistricting Office computer lab and using a web-based mapping application developed by the City of Dallas. Following a presentation to Dallas City Council on June 1, 2011, the web-based mapping application was open to the general public for use until June 30, 2011. During this time the Redistricting Commission continued to meet, and in addition to the Staff's normal duties, created maps and analysis of neighborhoods that were highlighted by the public during the hearings.

After the June 30, 2011 plan submission deadline passed, the Redistricting Commission began reviewing plans. The project staff continued to work with the public to understand how their maps did or did not comply with the City's adopted Redistricting Guidelines and the Voting Rights Act. For each plan, Staff provided a map and analysis that certified whether plans complied with the guidelines established by the Commission, and Staff also reviewed each plan for contiguity, population equality, and minority representation. If a plan did not meet the guidelines relating to these issues, project staff worked with the plan creator to provide additional explanations of the requirements and allow for corrections and alterations to the plan. Staff created GIS models to test for compactness and contiguity. The contiguity test also created maps for the plan creator with the location of non-contiguous blocks, which helped to streamline the correction process. All plans submitted to the Commission were posted on the Redistricting Commission website so that members of the public could review the proposed plans. By early August, the Commission had selected three plans for further consideration, and began modifying these plans to accommodate public feedback. The three final plans were presented at a public forum on August 24, 2011 which was attended by 250 people who spoke regarding all the plans. As at the public hearings, Staff provided setup support and assistance to both the public and the Commission during the meeting.

2013 Transforming Local Government Conference

City of Dallas Redistricting Case Study Proposal

The Commission selected a final plan on August 23, 2011 that was submitted to the Mayor on August 30, 2011. Staff prepared the plan presentation for the Mayor, as well as for the September 7, 2011 City Council briefing that was given by the Chair and Vice Chair of the Commission. On September 24, 2011, City Council held a Public Forum to present amendments of the Commissioner's map to the public, and Staff provided logistical support for the meeting, of whom 426 people attended. Following the approval of the new plan by City Council on October 5, 2011, Staff submitted the City's proposed Redistricting Plan to the Department of Justice for pre-clearance on Monday, October 24, 2011. The Plan received approval on December 23, 2011, thus concluding the 2011 Redistricting process.

Costs

In 2010 the City of Dallas budgeted \$649,358 for City Council Redistricting. This amount was reduced by 20% in early 2011 in order for the City to meet a looming budget shortfall, and the project was completed with a budget of \$519,487. \$352,928 went to salaries and benefits for six full-time employees, \$33,121 for supplies and materials, and \$133,438 for services and charges (renting out meeting rooms, office space, computer for redistricting lab, etc).

Savings

The 2011 City Council Redistricting process provided significant cost savings compared to the 2001 process. The budget for the previous redistricting process was \$712,324 for eight full-time employees, supplies, materials, services and other charges. The reduction of costs by 28% was achieved while Staff conducted 24 Redistricting Commission meetings, 10 public hearings, and one public forum between February and October 2011.

Identify innovative characteristics and explain how they improved the organization

Dallas' redistricting process was innovative in a number of ways. First, community outreach was extensive, and reached residents via the internet, email, post cards, and through a water bill to every household with City utilities. All meetings of the Redistricting Commission were televised, and available for online viewing within 24 hours of each meeting through the Commission's website. Redistricting Staff and Commission members stressed transparency, and all materials that were given to commission members were posted online prior to the meeting, and any public testimony or other documents received by the Commission was posted online within 24 hours after the meeting.

The efforts made by Staff to promote inclusion and transparency during the redistricting process was noticed by local print and television media, and the process was held up as a model for other state and local governmental organizations implementing redistricting.

Obstacles

The redistricting process was closely watched by City of Dallas Staff, City Council Members, and public. Due to the high level of public scrutiny over the project, issues, concerns, and technological issues had to be resolved quickly and effectively. Project Staff worked diligently with the public to ensure that issues were addressed as quickly as possible. Additionally, the schedule for the project required very quick turn-around on analysis and maps, with close attention paid to the quality of work.

Applicable Results and Real World Practicality

The redistricting process shows that inclusion and transparency can be used in an often heated political process. Likewise, other City of Dallas Departments have used the software and public outreach strategies to better connect with the public.

Was a private consultant used?

The City of Dallas did not use consultants for the 2011 Redistricting Process.

Presentation Style

Presentation Tools Plan to Use

PowerPoint with live ArcGIS software demonstration

How do you plan to be both entertaining and educational?

The presentation will incorporate the following activities:

- 1) The members of the presentation team will present to participants as if they are members of the Redistricting Commission. Team members will give the audience an overview of Dallas' past redistricting history, and give the 2010 census data. The presentation team will also demonstrate how the online redistricting software can be used by members of the public.
- 2) The team members will then present three different redistricting plans, using plans submitted by citizens of Dallas. Each "citizen" will give a brief discussion on why their plan should be selected by the Commission.
- 3) Commission members will discuss amongst themselves which plan they like, and can ask the team presenters further questions. The audience will then vote to select a plan or modify a plan for final approval.
- 4) The presentation team will then reveal to the audience what was the final plan that was selected. The audience will be able to ask questions (time permitting).