

The DRAFT Charter Report is a working document. The Commission's Report Writing Team (alternating and rotating Commissioners) is tasked with developing the Charter Report and presenting a draft version to the full Commission, for review and comment by the full Commission. The Report Writing Team will incorporate comments and suggestions into the next draft, with the goal to produce a final version for submission to the City Council and to the public.

**Notes about this draft**

- The draft includes the working outline proposed by the Writing Team in June 2022.
- Each section in the outline includes a working title and a working description (in italics). The description is intended as a guide for the Writing Team and is not meant to be all inclusive.
- There are suggestions for final content in many of the sections' descriptions.

**Suggestions for the writing team**

- Add comments for ideas, questions and suggestions
- Maintain a history of changes for the purpose of tracking – and archiving - ideas and thoughts by each contributor
- Start a list of URLs for linking to document references (link to as many existing online docs as possible)

**i. Executive Summary**

*This would be a brief summary of the key topics covered and main takeaways from the report. The summary provides an overview of the contents and the intent of the report, and describes a vision for the next commission and redistricting process.*

In February 2022, the Oakland Redistricting Commission adopted a new district map for the City of Oakland. The new map was adopted after more than a year of training, meetings and community engagement, in preparation for redrawing the district boundaries for the city's seven city council and school board districts. The new district boundaries are in effect for the city elections in Fall 2022. This is the first Charter Report issued by the first independent Oakland Redistricting Commission.

The Commission's duties and responsibilities are defined in the Oakland City Charter. As mandated by the Oakland City Charter:

"The Commission shall issue a report that explains the basis on which the Commission made its decisions in achieving compliance with the criteria listed above and shall include definitions of the terms and standards used in drawing the final plan."

In addition to the requirements in the City Charter mandate, this report chronicles the timeline of the selection process for the Commission, community outreach and the mapping process, culminating in the adoption of the new city map with new district boundaries. The report also describes the challenges faced by the Commission during an unprecedented global health pandemic, which limited public meetings to virtual, video meetings, and directly impacted the Commission's community outreach efforts. It is the hope of this Commission that these challenges are minimized or eradicated for the next and future commissions.

Due to the extensive list of challenges identified by the Commission, the report includes Lessons Learned and offers suggestions and recommendations for future commissions and city staff. The Commission suggests the City of Oakland adapt its approach to the next redistricting process on the basis of the recommendations in this report, such as: address increased allocation of city staff and its resources; increase the size of the budget and the prioritization of budget items; increase financial and professional resources for community outreach; provide efficient access to relevant city departments and agencies that can provide direct support for engagement with neighborhood councils and groups; and to provide existing data to better understand the demographics and equity concerns across Oakland.

The redistricting process encompasses more than drawing new district boundaries. The Commission understands the process is a complex, community effort and should start well ahead of the release of the census data. Community outreach is a critical part of the redistricting process and should be allocated more resources: funding, time, and connection with expertise in community engagement. As the mapping process got underway and as the deadline approached (as mandated by the City Charter), public comment made it clear there was concern and frustration with the community outreach efforts made by the Commission.

The Commission hopes the next redistricting commission will accept the recommendations offered in this report. The next commission, with increased support by city staff, could avoid predictable challenges and focus on essential community outreach. The Commission hopes this report addresses the public's comments and concerns as shared during meetings, via written comment, and at community outreach events.

This Oakland Redistricting Commission is honored to have served the people of Oakland for the past two years. We are a group of Oakland residents who volunteered for work that offers an incredible opportunity to participate as non-politicians, for the first time, in a civic, legal and politically charged process. Our intent was to conduct a transparent, fair and equitable redistricting process and to adopt a map that reflected that process. Fortunately, our work required engaging with Oaklanders who live all over the city. However, we acknowledge that many more Oaklanders were needed to participate. For all who did participate, we credit you with enriching our experience. As the report will testify: to serve our city was an honor, a responsibility, a challenge and an incredible learning experience.

**The Oakland Redistricting Commission**

Oakland, California, September 2022

## I. Introduction

- a. History of the Commission starting with Measure DD, mention the community groups that worked to put the measure on the ballot, the overwhelming voter support for an independent commission
- b. City Charter amendment that defines the Commission and its mandate, legal requirements, et al
- c. Application and selection process of Commissioners

The first independent Oakland Redistricting Commission was formed in the Fall of 2020, and was made up of fifteen Oakland residents who were tasked with redrawing Oakland's seven city council and school board districts. Starting in 2021, Oakland's redistricting process occurs every ten years, immediately following the release of United States Census Data.

In late 2013, organizations in Oakland began to discuss the possibility of creating an independent Redistricting Commission for our city, largely modeled after the State of California Citizens Redistricting Commission, which had already been established. The purpose of this city commission would be to attain a transparent and apolitical process of redrawing lines for the election of the Oakland City Council Members and the OUSD School Board Directors. The groups present during these public discussions, in which anyone could participate, included The League of Women Voters, the Urban Strategies Council, the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment Action, Oakland Rising, and City Council members Schaff and Kalb. Additionally, guidance was provided from the Irvine Foundation and the Greenlining Institute. A larger net was cast for public input using online surveys. As a result of these discussions and suggestions, the Oakland Redistricting Commission ballot measure was put forth to voters in 2014 as Measure DD. This measure passed with a 61.45% vote of "yes". The Charter of the City of Oakland was therefore amended to include Section 220: Redistricting of School Board and City Council Districts.

To explain the Redistricting process, and how the Oakland Redistricting Commissioners are selected, here is a summary of Measure DD, provided by City Attorney Barbara Parker:

*"Every ten years beginning in 2021, the Commission would conduct a redistricting process. The Commission's meetings would be open and public with notice and agendas required by state open meeting law and Oakland's Sunshine Ordinance. Commissioners would be required to disclose all contacts regarding matters related to the Commission's redistricting role and process.*

*The Commission would consist of thirteen (13) members who would be appointed in accordance with the procedure specified in the measure. Membership on the Commission would be open to all individuals who resided in Oakland for three years preceding the date of their application.*

*The City Administrator would manage the application process, ensuring that the pool of applications meets specified standards of diversity and qualifications and that the qualified pool includes at least forty (40) individuals and at least three applicants from each existing City Council district. Persons with "conflicts of interest" as defined by the measure would be ineligible for membership on the Commission and would be removed from the pool.*

*Next, a three-member screening panel composed of a retired judge, a volunteer law student or public policy student and a local, nonprofit good government organization would narrow the pool to thirty (30) applicants. The City Administrator would select the screening panel based on criteria established by regulations drafted by the City Attorney and approved by the City Council. The screening panel would select the most qualified applicants to perform the Commission's duties who reflect the geographic, racial, ethnic and economic diversity of the City of Oakland; the pool must include at least two applicants from each Council district. Then the City Clerk would randomly draw six names.*

*Finally, the six randomly selected Commissioners would select seven additional Commissioners and two alternate members from the remaining applicant pool. For the ten years following their service. Commissioners would be ineligible to hold an elected office in the City. For four years following service. Commissioners would be ineligible to 1) hold appointive office for the City of Oakland or the School Board, 2) serve as paid staff or consultants to the City Council or any member of City Council or the Oakland School Board, 3) receive a non-competitive contract with the City, or 4) act or register as a local government lobbyist for four years."*

The City Administrator's office properly followed protocol, as described above, of Section 220 of the Oakland City Charter. The three-person screening panel conducted interviews from June 23rd through July 16th, 2020, and subsequently narrowed the qualified field to thirty applicants.

On Wednesday, July 22nd, 2020, the names of the first six Commissioners were randomly selected: Jan Stevens (District 1), Benjie Achtenberg (District 2), Lilibeth Gangas (District 3), Diana Miller (District 4), Stephanie Goode (District 5), and Mary Velasco (District 6).

These six Commissioners, over the course of several meetings and with use of criteria and data around geographic, racial, ethnic, age, and economic diversity, selected the remaining seven Commissioners: Tracy McKnight (District 1), Shirley Gee (District 2), Amber Blackwell (District 3), Paul Marshall (District 4), Martha Hernandez (District 6), Gloria Crowell (District 7), Tejal Shah (District 7); and two Alternate Commissioners: Daniel Chesmore (District 6), and Masoud Hamidi (District 5).

In early January, 2021, Martha Hernandez resigned, and Masoud Hamidi became a voting member of the Commission. Bharat Singh (District 5) was chosen as a new Alternate Commissioner. A year later, in January of 2022, Tracy McKnight resigned, and Bharat Singh became a voting member of the Commission.

## **II. Committees and Consultants**

*Description of the formation of ad-hoc/sub-committees. Definitions of the scope of work for each committee, legal requirements for committee meetings and activities. Goals, milestones, outcomes from each committee (Individual Committee public documents can be attached here, or linked to the website, or attached as an Appendix).*

*Identification of each contracted consultant and expertise, plus scope of work, how many people on each consultant team, RFP and selection process. RFP's, contracts, budgets, reports attached as an Appendix (or links to the website).*

### **Ad-Hoc Committees:**

- Bylaws and Procedures
- Consultant Selection
- Government and School Board
- Outreach
- Communications
- Faith-Based Organizations
- Community-Based Organizations
- Charter Report

### **Consultants:**

- Redistricting Partners (mapping)
- Eastside Arts Alliance and Outreach by Design (community outreach)

### **III. Budget and City Staff**

*The role of the City Administrator's Office to provide project management and city staff resources for the Commission and the redistricting process. Identification of city staff team members and roles. History for the initial budget (also refer to City Charter) and budget allocations, including management and oversight of the budget. Describe the Commission's decision to request more funds from the City Council (and outcome). Include all budget numbers here.*

- Link to the original budget
- Attach letters to City Council members (Appendix)

The Commission's budget is determined by the City and is based on a calculation that references the 2013 redistricting budget (see Charter for the calculation). There were (insert #) of budget items, with the bulk of the budget allocated to the mapping consultant. The original budget did not include funds for a community outreach consultant. Additional funds were granted by the City Council after formal written requests by the leadership team were sent to City Council members and their key staff members, followed by verbal requests at virtual City Council budget meetings in May and June 2021.

The city staff maintained the Commission's website and managed access to its social media accounts. The city staff produced the Commission's meeting agendas and meeting minutes. The city staff hosted the Zoom meetings and provided technical support. City staff was also responsible for engaging city government authorized vendors for printing and advertising, and for managing contracts with vendors and consultants who performed services for payment. City staff served as a liaison to other departments, agencies and the City Council.

**IV. Training** : Government, Civic, Ethics and Legal Trainings

- a. Brown Act and Sunshine Ordinance*
- b. Government Ethics Act*
- c. Robert's Rules of Order*
- d. Race and Equity Training (December 9, 2020)*
- e. California Common Cause Workshop*
- f. Public Ethics Training (March 2021)*
- g. Redistricting Law & Criteria, Communities of Interest Strategies (July 28, 2021)*

## **V. Meetings**

*The Commission held regular monthly meetings on the second Wednesday of each month at 5pm, beginning October 2020. Special meetings were scheduled as needed to accommodate special activities, presentations, workshops and to address additional business. Live mapping was conducted during both general and special meetings. All meeting agendas included an Open Forum and public input was requested for each agenda item.*

*Each meeting was led by the Chair, along with two vice/co -chairs. City staff members provided the technical infrastructure, administrative support for agendas and legal counsel. City staff members were available to answer procedural, historical and other types of questions. The roles of Chair and Co-Chairs were determined by a simple survey of the all of the Commissioners, who expressed their individual interest to assume either or both roles during three -month cycles. The schedule for the rotating Chair and Co-Chair was set in November 2020.*

*Meeting agendas: how each was determined, the release schedule, publicly available via email and the website. Community members who signed up to the email list received the agenda via email. Zoom links sent via email, 24 hours and 1 hour before the meeting.*

- [link to meeting agendas](#)
- [link to meeting minutes](#)



## VI. Outreach

*Describe the initial plan for the Commission to perform all of its own outreach and develop strategies to do the outreach, including by individual committees, tapping into existing community based organizations, civic groups, school groups, church groups, etc. to access their networks of even more groups and individuals. Detail the Commission's discussions on priorities, strategies, methodologies, etc. Detail the activities the Commissioners engaged in (town halls, city council meetings and newsletters, farmers' markets, festivals, classrooms, neighborhood meetings, special events (SPUR, Oakland Rising), etc.). Include activities and opportunities identified by the Commission but did not necessarily succeed in doing.*

*Discuss the determination of the need for an outside consultant to perform extensive community outreach, with specific expertise and priorities. Describe the process and timeline for selecting the community outreach consultant. Describe the consultant's approach, outreach plan, and deliverables (Outreach consultant's RFP and final report attached as an Appendix).*

### Keywords and Concepts

- a clear and early strategy
- We believe the participation of as many Oaklanders as possible is crucial to the goal of transparent, fair, equitable redistricting process

The Commission's outreach was done exclusively by the Commissioners during the first several months of its tenure. Three ad-hoc committees, the Outreach committee, the Government and School Board committee and the Communications committee were formed to develop strategy and content for the purposes of community outreach.

The reports from each committee are included in the Appendix.

## VII. Mapping

*This section of the report should be substantial. It would minimally encompass: the Commission's intent to adopt a fair and equitable map for Oaklanders; the timeline from the first training with Redistricting Partners, to the first public mapping, to the first live mapping; details of the evolutions of the various maps; define the data that accompanied each draft map; a final analysis of the process by the Commission; an analysis of the final, new map (include Dept. of Race & Equity's analysis, if available).*

### **Include :**

- *Describe the legal framework for redistricting (VRA, CA Fair Maps Act, Oakland City Charter)*
- *The order of redistricting criteria within the legal framework (equal population, contiguity, compactness, etc.)*
- *Communities of Interest (COI definition(s) and position of the priority of COI in redistricting criteria)*
- *Census data (what data is included, late/unpredictable availability, concepts and interpretation of concepts)*
- *Forms of public testimony (how to submit, when and how was it shared publicly, especially the written)*
- *Hand drawn maps by the public*
- *DistrictR (what is it, how does it work, how many maps were submitted)*
- *Commission's process for live mapping (discuss the Commission's intent and the attempt to apply a methodology; number and frequency of meetings dedicated to live mapping; how much time in each meeting dedicated to live mapping; how time and schedule constraints affected the mapping process; the decision making process for voting to adopt and eliminate maps, etc.)*
- *Commission's final adoption of a new map for the City of Oakland (summarize why the new map was adopted)*

## VIII. A De-Brief

*Include all of the observations, concerns, criticisms, etc. offered by the Commissioners in the general and special meetings (organize and condense for repetition and clarity). Include the ad-hoc committees report summaries here and/or full reports as an Appendix (or link to the reports).*

- Summary of the Commission's de-brief meeting
- Include the full list here or link to the Appendix?
- Link to the meeting minutes for that de-brief meeting (April 13, 2022)

The Commission dedicated a special meeting to a de-briefing session after the new district map was finally adopted. The Commissioners shared their thoughts and perspectives and evaluated the Commission's overall process and effectiveness. The de-brief anticipated the writing of this report and served primarily as a way for the Commissioners to speak openly to their experiences, observations, concerns and criticisms of the redistricting process.

This is the un-edited De-Brief by the Commission in April 2022:

- **Process**
  - Where will the report go? What city departments will review and take any action on recommendations?
  - Did not have clear process or common understanding of terms i.e. definition of COIs (coliseum)
  - Did not discuss how we would come to decisions? I.e. flip flopping issues
  - Permanent decisions made based on secondary items (i.e. economic engines)
  - What is a common understanding of economic engines?
  - How many economic engines are deemed as not equity issues (i.e. like at least 2 )
  - Community Input COI comment feedback not addressed and some seemed to be respected over others
  - Learning curve for what is needed was high, not clear guidance on how process, questions, Robert Rules of Order questions on imbalanced power
  - Decisions made on second hand comments vs taking into account what was heard & as a group assess
  - Hard to balance all the input (calls, hand drawn map, emails)
  - Missed opportunities to be educated more on impact of decisions (i.e. schools)
  - Gaps in training (given inaugural commissions) , what questions to ask, training on communities, economics, could have had more presentations to help train
  - Limited time for Commissioners to be trained to lead this process
  - Formation of commission (announcements go further and wider) ,wider outreach and wider outreach in secondary languages
  - Commissioner recruitment, application, interviews, selections: profiles and application process to address like schools, process of City to select first 4 Commissioners and then to select the remainder
  - Governance/By laws could have been more detailed on "worst case scenarios" on Quorum, Flip flopping,
  - Trainings on Brown Act, ethics, equity - Commission should have follow up to make sure folks are learning
  - Monthly meeting to get the work done was not realistic, significantly relied on City staff, set better expectations of roles (city vs Commissioners)
  - More Youth involvement in process , more schools awareness
  - Legal procedures, charter understanding,
  - When new commissioners joined, follow up training, common understanding of map making (population vs CVAPs)
  - What is the commissions agreed definition on economic engine - what should ideally a district included, is an economic engine important, scale of a district,
  - Public forum made it difficult to discuss (i.e. public forums -when public commented we can't respond so not as effective) - dual systems (working sessions and a decision making meetings).
  - Better understanding Role of staff vs commissioners, committees collaborations
  - City transitions impact
  - Training on agendas
  - Commissioners to go see districts themselves
  - More integration with consultants
  - How do we have better outcome - i.e. selection of commissioners - lottery selections and who selected the remaining
  - How can commission modify charter to address the timeline issues

- Report should address structural needs improvements
- Budget for communications (i.e. flyers to be sent out to all oaklanders)
- Disclosure requirements should be made more clear – sorry I missed most of what you said Comm Goode - can fill in later.
- The governance committee could have set up more trainings? Can the committees meet and go over what worked and what didn't?
- This process needs more staff and resources and working sessions. Too much of a burden on city staff in that way that things are set up now. City needs to create more time (paid hours?) for city staff towards this process.
- Committees can review charter amendments but do our own debriefs first.
- We did make accomplishments - we did as much as we could have done given all of the moving pieces.

- **Timeline**

- Kept hitting deadline to not have the court be the decider
- At this point, how long do we want this process to take? What are the logistics of this process moving forward? Let's parcel out this work! (I agree). Once we debrief we do need to come back together and have another conversation. We need a trained facilitator to get our input and capture it correctly - move us through. Messy okay, as long as we move through it with a facilitator. In 2 weeks, we meet again - this is a friendly amendment. Pending the budget. We need an action plan to get to a final report.
- We do have Commissioners who need to resign, as we were only committed to Dec, 2021.

- **Data / Definitions**

- Common/agreed definition of COI, economic engines,
- The Federal Voting Rights Act, Charter, Roberts, CA Fair Rights Act, Equity, Ethics, Brown Act/ Sunshine, all legal mandates, laws, concepts. Training was really quick. Good to have time to process the training. We did bring back Darlene Flynn. But sometimes we don't fully digest the training until we are fully in practice. Need updates with training to keep us on track.
- We should understand attendance boundaries of OUSD
- More info about the existing COIs. Block grant funding. Certain associations who work together - who are they? What are we dismantling?
- Resources in City and from trainings, can we share the different definitions that were communicated to us? Redistricting Partners, Darlene Flynn (equity analysis of map). Define COI and Communities of Concern.
- If we could have an exercise in committee debriefing, can we merge together definitions? Should be an iterative process.

- **Committees**

- Governance committee to have better laid out roles (commissioners, city, consultants)
- Overlap in committees but somethings fell through the cracks /follow ups, more integration without violating Brown Act
- If we could have an exercise in committee debriefing, can we merge together definitions? Should be an iterative process.
- Who is scheduling these meetings? 4 or fewer commissioners. We schedule these amongst ourselves. Or city staff organizes?

- **Community Input**

- It is important to have 1:1 conversations with community. The email, survey, distr, public meetings, workshops were good but more conversations with community is important & powerful
- Would like to see a way to weigh the input to be objective (i.e. District 7 input ignored?)
- Expectation is that there are multiple ways that we are receiving community input. Who can access these meetings? Who could attend? Other ways to solicit input. Maybe write this into the charter about how we receive comm input.

- **Mapping**

- Districtr used different data and equations that made it hard to compare, the discrepancies between tool and consultant mapping, Live mapping although hard ended up being needed, perhaps use live mapping earlier in process to understand impact
- Zoom was a very difficult tool to use to do the mapping (commissioners had to reuse their own resources), more city staff support needs to be provided
- How would this process been done in person?
- How can we utilize tech to our best knowledge and advantage
- How many maps can we participate in , how to collaborate on mpa in groups
- When a map is presented majority rules?
- Districts should comply with the charter. Criteria to follow. Population was first priority.
- Regarding timeline, timeline should track comments that are made by the public. Meeting dates, workshops, 1st maps and follow ups – all could be captured on a timeline. How much public comment comes in and from which neighborhoods and districts. Who are we not hearing from?
- Objectivity. Should be clarified and / or written into the charter. Representing the districts where we live or are we advocating for the whole City? Where is the line. Public perception of our work, are we trustworthy?
- No such thing as full objectivity. But we should have criteria to make decisions.

**External factor** - the pandemic. Census data was late across the country. Digital outreach reliance. Physically could not do as much outreach because of this burden. We were impacted personally by the pandemic. Human side of the conversation.

In terms of deciding an outreach plan or forming committees. Next commission needs to spend time reading our notes. Understand the work of the Commission before setting up the committees. We may have pigeonholed ourselves.

**Disclosures**

- Commissioner to be more direct on organizations they represent that may bias process

## IX. Challenges, Lessons Learned, and Recommendations

*The Challenges section is a narrative of the successive challenges experienced during the entire redistricting timeline. Lessons Learned and Recommendations address those challenges. Include all of the suggestions, ideas, hopes, etc. offered by the Commissioners (similar format as previous section, with a positive, productive tone: less a laundry list and more an opportunity to transition from what happened to what could or can happen). Recommendations could include: changes to the City Charter; a longer timeline for the entire redistricting process; a bigger budget; more engagement with groups who were represented in the Commission's meetings; (refer to our existing list and add more ideas).*

*Also include any formally submitted recommendations by the public (e.g., The Oakland LWV formal letter submitted)*

### Challenges

The Commission faced a range of unpredictable and predictable challenges throughout the course of its tenure. The biggest challenge for the Commission was to conduct a visionary equitable and fair redistricting process during the global health pandemic caused by the rapid and dangerous spread of COVID -19. This unprecedented challenge directly affected the Commission's ability and intention to engage in extensive community outreach and to regularly and frequently conduct productive public meetings. The pandemic led to severe city - and state-mandated restrictions for in -person meetings and public gatherings. The restrictions forced the Commission to conduct all of its meetings virtually via Zoom. The web video conferencing format had a direct impact on the quality of discussions between Commissioners and between the Commissioners and the public participants. It was difficult to host a and manage robust discussions in physical isolation from each other, without the understanding of a person's body language while speaking and without the benefit of experiencing more than one Commissioner speak at a time. The constraints on that human experience had a direct impact on the duration of meetings, with more time needed for all participants who desired to speak. The live mapping sessions were significantly hampered by the meeting format, which introduced technical challenges (difficulty in following the mapping consultant's narration while changing district boundary lines, difficulty in seeing street level details on the consultant's display) and conceptual challenges (comprehending the concurrent live analysis of the relationship between population size, voting age populations and percentages with Communities of Interest). Further, the reliance on web video and audio technology for all meetings was a significant obstacle for many Oaklanders who do not have personal or easy access to the technology and the internet.

Other challenges may have been avoided with more planning, preparation, and training. For example, there was much effort put into the application and selection process of Commissioners by city staff, but observably less in the effort to pre-emptively notify Oakland residents of the timeline and deadline for the redistricting process. The relationship between the Commission and the city staff, and the roles that staff and Commissioners were responsible for should have been clearly defined early in the process, in order to minimize missed opportunities for learning, research and community engagement. As described in the De-Brief section of this report, the Commissioners experienced inadequate or untimely support from city staff regarding the interpretation of its bylaws and procedures; the understanding and application of Oakland's transparency laws for holding meetings, setting agendas, and maintaining quorum; and, especially, financial and logistical support for community outreach. The Commission had unmet expectations, which may have arisen from an early misunderstanding of these roles and responsibilities.

The Commission's early outreach strategies were developed before the Commission realized a dedicated community outreach consultant was needed. The Commission's original budget, as set by the City, did not include funds for an outreach consultant. The expectation by the Commissioners and city staff was that the Commission would develop and execute its own outreach strategy, with some funds available for printing and advertising costs. The Outreach, Communications, and Government committees each developed strategies, while the committees that targeted Faith -Based and Community-Based Organizations were tasked with generating substantial lists of those organizations and contacting as many as possible. Though most of these organizations had websites, contact forms and email addresses, many had only phone numbers. Due to the pandemic, many organizations did not have regular office hours, or were understaffed, and were hard to contact.

The process to find and hire an outreach consultant took much longer than anticipated, which jeopardized the outreach planning leading up to the first mapping sessions. Additional funds were not available for several weeks after the City Council granted the Commission \$40,000, which precluded initiating the process to retain the consultant. In addition, the census data had not yet been released with delays caused by the pandemic and the federal administration. These were unplanned events that occurred during a crucial time in the redistricting process.

Restrictions for in-person gatherings started to lift in Fall 2021, which offered long awaited opportunities to do in -person community outreach. Some of these activities included town halls, farmers markets, festivals and community organization gatherings. Individual commissioners volunteered to do in -person outreach, meeting Oaklanders, promoting the

Commission's work and goals, gathering public comment and signups for Commission news, and answering questions about redistricting. The Commission had produced printed materials for tabling at markets and festivals before the outreach consultant was officially under contract. Although there was enthusiasm from all Commissioners to participate at in-person outreach events, the pandemic remained a threat, hindering the capacity of the Commission to work to full effect.

The welcome addition of the community outreach consultant offered relief and new challenges for the Commission's outreach efforts. Although the three committees dedicated to outreach and communications remained active, there was a transfer of duties and expectations to the consultant, reinforced by city staff. A sense of easing of duties on the committees was simultaneous with the need to ramp up outreach in order to "catch up" with the previous slow pace of strategy implementation and outcomes. The consultant developed an outreach strategy and a methodology for capturing results and outcomes, and they performed needed services, such as networking, scheduling, active engagement, new content development and design. However, there was a sense of disconnection between the consultant and the Outreach and Communications committees, and a lack of direction, which may have come from the late entry of the consultant into the process and further misunderstandings about roles and responsibilities. Some outreach projects proposed by the committees and the Commission did not come to fruition, such as billboard and radio advertising. The committees eventually stopped meeting regularly, as they had been since they were formed. Not long after the outreach consultant joined the redistricting process, the Commission's project manager and lead city staff member left his office. His departure was unexpected and came at a critical time when public awareness of the redistricting process was rapidly increasing, the Commission was entering the mapping phase, and the charter-specified deadline was fast approaching.

The mapping consultant was a team of highly professional people, who were clearly experts in the complexities of redistricting. The mapping consultant who led the virtual mapping session for each meeting answered all questions, explained key redistricting concepts, and addressed mapping outcomes that occurred with each change of a district boundary line. The meetings that included mapping sessions were long, often lasting several hours as the deadline approached. This was partly due to the original meeting schedule, which had to be modified with the addition of several special meetings to accommodate live mapping, and partly due to the Commission's learning curve with regard to setting its meeting agenda. The production of several iterations of maps introduced legal (regarding specificity and transparency) and logistical challenges (the mapping consultant needed a certain amount of time to prepare each map atlas for the next meeting). There was a several week gap early in the mapping phase when the Commission could not discuss previously drawn maps. The delay affected the meeting schedule for the remainder of the redistricting process.

The Commission spent a lot of time discussing its goals to redraw the districts with focus on equity and fairness, following the federal, state and city legal requirements to draw a fair map. The Commission's focus on discussions without much public input and without the aid of more guest speakers who could facilitate discussions may have been counterproductive. The Commission acknowledges it did not achieve a clear understanding and agreement on key redistricting concepts and definitions, such as Communities of Interest. The Commission believes the redistricting process and the people of Oakland would have been better served with more guest speakers, more workshops, more live mapping sessions, and more time spent on training and learning about redistricting before the mapping phase began.

The Commission was unable to adopt a final map by the deadline of December 31, 2021. The Commission was still discussing, and debating, the merits and problems with multiple maps in the last few weeks of December. This delay was causing frustration amongst Commissioners and for the public. The confluence of being unable to come to a consensus on one map with the increasing volume of public discontent with the redistricting process, as a whole, was very challenging for the Commission. One Commissioner with voting privileges resigned during this time, requiring an election to promote one of the alternate Commissioners to take her place. The pace and decibel of the discussions during the meetings, including public comment, revealed fault lines in the civic discourse. Commissioners felt discouragement while nearing the end of the yearlong redistricting process, with a new map yet to be adopted and the prospect of having a Superior Court County judge decide which map to temporarily adopt while the Commission completed its work.

The unexpected and undesirable prolonging of the Commission's term brought continued challenges, including additional resignations by voting and alternate Commissioners, failure to hold quorum during meetings and failure to schedule new special meetings for the purposes of adopting a final district map and writing the Charter Report, also due to lack of quorum. The Commission succeeded in adopting a new map (F5) for Oakland's seven districts in March 2022 and held one more meeting in April 2022.

## **Lessons Learned**

The Commission learned that redistricting and community outreach go hand-in-hand and both require time, planning, compassion and persistence. Redistricting and community outreach are most successful with the collaboration of community-based organizations; civic organizations and their leaders; faith-based organizations and their leaders; neighborhood councils and groups; parents, students and teachers in the OUSD; and passionate Oaklanders who are actively engaged across networks of Communities of Interests. These communities and organizations are key to connecting with Oaklanders in every part of the city and they are critical for understanding the concept of Communities of Interest. The extensive community outreach that the Commission envisions needs extensive input from communities, before strategies are developed. Mapping strategies to the living realities of communities, and adapting strategies as outreach work is done, must be prioritized.

A dedicated city staff is required to perform all of the administrative work that happens before, during and after public meetings. The city staff maintained the Commission's website and controlled access to its social media accounts. The city staff produced the Commission's meeting agendas and meeting minutes. The city staff hosted the Zoom meetings and provided technical support. City staff was also responsible for engaging city government authorized vendors for printing and advertising, and for managing contracts with vendors and consultants who performed services for payment. The mapping consultant went through a city government RFP process that began before the Commission was formed, and the outreach consultant was selected because of its existing established relationship with city government. City staff served as a liaison to other departments, agencies and the City Council. This scope of responsibilities makes it clear that the next commission's city staff be granted more resources to build a bigger team of several city staffers with overlapping areas of expertise, with access to critical city resources such as experts, reports, research and data that support the redistricting process.

Expert consultants, paid and volunteer, who offer various skills and technologies, and come from fields of scholarship and interests related to redistricting, are needed in the redistricting process. They would offer guidance, perspectives, experience and support to the commissioners. The commission would collaborate with contracted consultants frequently. Learning and applying new knowledge should be an ongoing activity for the next commission.

## **Recommendations, Outreach**

The Commission and the ad-hoc committees identified numerous opportunities and strategies for improving community outreach. (Link to reports in Appendix?)

- In advance of the formation of a new Commission, city staff should have a marketing plan for engaging Oakland residents in the redistricting process. The plan should include minimum requirements for announcing and promoting the upcoming redistricting process, such as printed postal mailers that are sent to every address in the City, billboard advertisements, and radio public service announcements. The City should plan to mail at least two informational pieces with the important dates and instructions for participating in the redistricting process to every address.
- Officially submitted public comment should offer more options and not be solely technology-based
- The commission's budget should include funds for an expert community outreach consultant and the consultant selection process should be started as soon as the Commission is equipped to select the consultant. This would be a priority for the Commission.

## **Recommendations, Commissioner Selection Process**

- Spread the word to more people in Districts 5, 6, and 7 on how and when to apply to be a Commissioner and give people enough time to submit their application.
- Either expand the numbers on the Commission to include parents who have children currently in the OSUD or representatives of PTA's who have children currently in the OSUD.

## **Recommendations, City Staff**

The Commission suggests the City of Oakland adapt its approach to the next redistricting process. A new approach would address:



- Increase the amount of time dedicated to the redistricting process
- Increase the number of city staff members who directly support the Commission
- Start the public engagement at least (1) year prior to the deadline for the new map, with or without a new commission already formed
- Identify important redistricting milestones and critical events and create a realistic schedule that the Commission can reference and adjust
- Increase the overall budget and prioritize budget items, especially community outreach
- Increase financial and professional resources for community outreach
- Provide access to relevant city departments and agencies and their experts and staff who can provide engagement with neighborhood councils and groups
- Provide existing city reports and data to better understand the demographics and equity concerns across Oakland

### **Recommendations, Meetings**

- Regular, standing meetings should occur more often than once per month
- Regular and Special Meetings should be scheduled on different days and times of the week, when more than one type is scheduled for the month (provide opportunity for more public participation)
- Lengthen the window for submitting meeting agenda items and for the time the Chair and Co-Chairs have to set the meeting agenda
- Host a Speaker series covering core concepts for redistricting (history, laws, CVAP, equity)
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### **Recommendations, Mapping**

- The mapping consultant should offer multiple training sessions, including demonstrations, that explain and illustrate the relationship between overall population, voting age population, and population by race/ethnicity.
- The commission should schedule more live mapping sessions and allot enough time in each session to allow for live analysis
- If the online mapping tool, Districtr, or another similar online mapping tool is used, there should be at least one in-depth training and demonstration session. The public should be allowed to ask questions of the consultant during the demonstration.
- The online mapping tool should be promoted to the public as soon as the census data is available. It could be promoted to teachers and students as a way to understand redistricting.

**X. A Proposal for Future Commissions**

*A summary of the Commission's vision for the next Commission.*

An independent redistricting commission is still a good idea. For this inaugural independent Commission, there were high expectations, hopes and yearnings for a new and different kind of redistricting process – an all-inclusive community-led effort to effect change in our access to political power and traditional, political representation, which could have a positive, long lasting effect for future generations. It is the hope of this Commission that the experience, lessons and recommendations shared in this report contribute to the next, new and different kind of redistricting process.

**Appendix / Appendices**

- Glossary of Terms and Definitions
- Bylaws and Rules of Procedure Committee De-Brief Report
- Communications Committee De-Brief Report
- Consultant Selection Committee De-Brief Report
- Government and School Board Committee De-Brief Report
- Outreach Committee De-Brief Report
- CBO De-Brief Report
- FBO De-Brief Report
- RFP for Mapping Consultant
- Redistricting Partners Final Report
- RFP for Community Outreach Consultant
- Eastside Arts Alliance and Outreach by Design Final Report
- Oakland City Staff Final Report
- Letter from Commissioner Hamidi