

# City of Capitola

## Introduction to Districting

May 28, 2026

# Election Systems

1. “At Large”
2. “From District” or “Residence” Districts
3. “By District”

The California Voting Rights Act (CVRA) was written to specifically encourage by-district elections.

# CVRA Background

# California Voting Rights Act (CVRA)

- ❑ Under the Federal Voting Rights Act (passed in 1965), a jurisdiction must fail 4 factual tests before it is in violation of the law.
  
- ❑ The California VRA makes it significantly easier for plaintiffs to force jurisdictions into “by-district” election systems by eliminating two of the US Supreme Court Gingles tests:
  - ❑ ~~Can the protected class constitute the majority of a district?~~
  - ❑ Does the protected class vote as a bloc?
  - ❑ Do the voters who are not in the protected class vote in a bloc to defeat the preferred candidates of the protected class?
  - ❑ ~~Do the “totality of circumstances” indicate race is a factor in elections?~~
  
- ❑ Liability is now determined only by the presence of racially polarized voting and dilution of the protected class’s voting strength
  
- ❑ Unclear impact of U.S. Supreme Court’s *Louisiana v Callais* (2026) decision.

# CVRA Impact

- **Switched (or in the process of switching) as a result of CVRA:**
  - At least 345 school districts
  - 46 Community College Districts
  - 212 cities
  - 1 County Board of Supervisors
  - 78 water and other special districts.
- **Palmdale, Santa Clara and Santa Monica fought “on the merits.”**
  - Palmdale spent about \$1.8 million, Santa Clara \$1.37 million, and Santa Monica over \$12 million, just on their defense.
  - Santa Monica plaintiffs requested \$22 million in fees.
  - So far, no jurisdiction has won a case.
  - Huntington Beach: awaiting trial court ruling.
  - Santa Monica: back in Superior Court in October.
- **Key settlements:**
  - Palmdale: \$4.7 million
  - Santa Clara: \$3.8 million
  - Modesto: \$3 million
  - Highland: \$1.3 million
  - Anaheim: \$1.1 million
  - Whittier: \$750,000
  - Santa Barbara: \$600,000
  - Tulare Hospital: \$500,000
  - Camarillo: \$233,000
  - Compton Unified: \$200,000
  - Madera Unified: about \$170,000
  - Hanford Joint Union Schools: \$118,000
  - Merced City: \$42,000
- **An estimated \$20 million in total settlements and court awards so far.**

# Districting Process and Rules

# (Updated) Districting Timeline

| Step   | Description  |
|--|--|
| <b>Adopt Resolution</b><br>April 30                    | Approve resolution of intention within 45 days of demand letter.   |
| <b>Initial Discussion</b><br>May 14                    | Introduction to process and criteria. Discussion regarding 5 districts or 4 districts and citywide-elected Mayor.  |
| <b>Two Initial Hearings</b><br>May 28 & June 11        | Held prior to release of draft maps.<br>Education and to solicit input on the composition of districts.  |
| <b>Submit initial draft maps</b><br>On/before June 15  | Deadline for residents to submit <b>initial</b> draft maps for Council consideration at the third hearing. (2 <sup>nd</sup> round draft maps due 7/13.)                          |
| <b>Post initial draft maps online</b><br>June 18       | Maps must be posted at least 7 days prior to consideration at a Council hearing. (2 <sup>nd</sup> round maps posted July 16.)  |
| <b>Community Forum</b><br>Saturday, June 20, 11am      | Webinar to discuss the process, review the initial draft maps, discuss the public mapping tools, and answer any questions from residents.  |
| <b>Two hearings on draft maps</b><br>June 25 & July 23 | Two meetings to discuss and revise the draft maps and to discuss the election sequence. Possible map selection and ordinance introduction July 23.                               |
| <b>Map adoption</b><br>August 28                       | Map adopted via ordinance or resolution. Final map must be posted at least 7 days prior to adoption. Map must be adopted within 120 days of Resolution of Intention (August 28). |

# Districting Rules and Goals

## 1. Federal Laws

Equal Population  
Federal Voting Rights Act  
No Racial Gerrymandering



## 2. California Criteria

*In prioritized order:*

1. **Geographically contiguous**
2. **Avoid division of neighborhoods and “communities of interest”**  
(Socio-economic geographic areas that should be kept together)
3. **Easily identifiable boundaries**
4. **Compact**  
(Do not bypass one group of people to get to a more distant group of people)

## 2. California Prohibition

“Shall not adopt election district boundaries for the purpose of favoring or discriminating against an incumbent, political candidate, or political party.”

## 3. Other Traditional Redistricting Principles

Future population growth

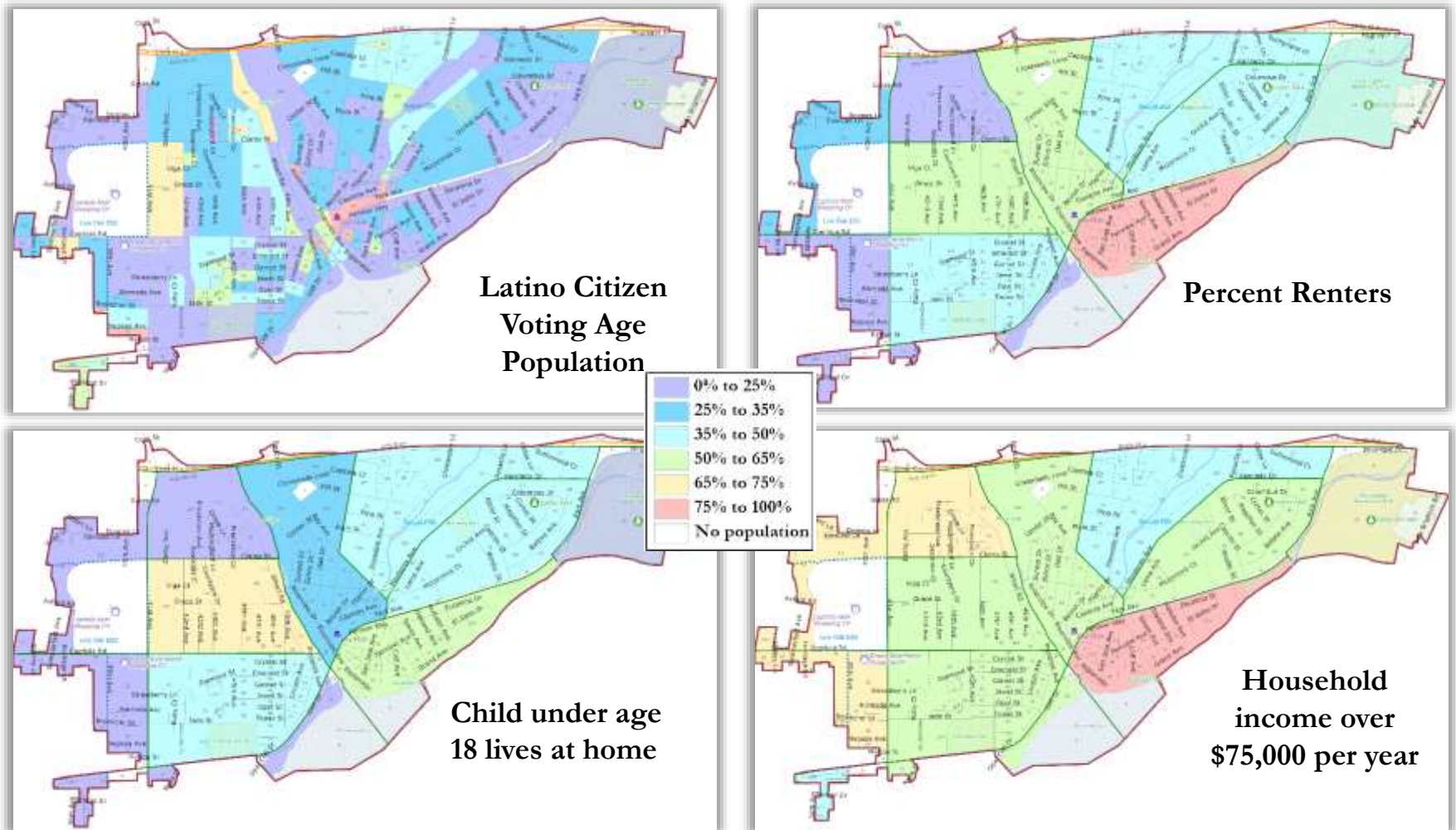
# Districting Data and Public Tools

# Demographic Summary

Lots of data are provided for every district in every draft map.

| Category                      | Field             | Total            | Category  | Field                             | Total        |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|---|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| 2020 Census                   | Total Population  | 9,949            | Age   | age0-19                           | 16%          |
| Total Pop.                    | Hispanic/Latino   | 22%              |   | age20-60                          | 51%          |
|                               | NH White          | 65%              |   | age60plus                         | 33%          |
|                               | NH Black          | 2%               | Immigration   | immigrants                        | 14%          |
|                               | NH Asian/Pac.Isl. | 9%               |   | naturalized                       | 41%          |
|                               | NH Native Amer.   | 1%               | Language spoken at home   | english                           | 81%          |
| Citizen Voting Age Pop        | Total             | 7,266            |   | spanish                           | 13%          |
|                               | Hisp              | 17%              |   | asian-lang                        | 3%           |
|                               | NH White          | 75%              |   | other lang                        | 3%           |
|                               | NH Black          | 2%               | Language Fluency  | Speaks Eng. "Less than Very Well" | 7%           |
|                               | Asian/Pac.Isl.    | 5%               |   | Education (among those age 25+)   | hs-grad      |
|                               | Native Amer.      | 1%               | bachelor  |                                   | 29%          |
| Total                         | 7,005             | graduatedegree   | 19%   |                                   |              |
| Voter Registration (Nov 2024) | Latino est.       | 15%              | Child in Household  | child-under18                     | 17%          |
|                               | Spanish-Surnamed  | 14%              | Pct of Pop. Age 16+   | employed                          | 62%          |
|                               | Asian-Surnamed    | 2%               |   | Household Income                  | income 0-25k |
|                               | Filipino-Surnamed | 1%               | income 25-50k   |                                   | 10%          |
|                               | NH White est.     | 80%              | income 50-75k   |                                   | 10%          |
|                               | NH Black          | 1%               | income 75-200k  |                                   | 39%          |
| Total                         | 4,465             | income 200k-plus | 21%   |                                   |              |
| Voter Turnout (Nov 2022)      | Latino est.       | 11%              | Housing Stats   | single family                     | 59%          |
|                               | Spanish-Surnamed  | 10%              |   | multi-family                      | 41%          |
|                               | Asian-Surnamed    | 2%               |   | rented                            | 48%          |
|                               | Filipino-Surnamed | 1%               |   | owned                             | 52%          |
|                               | NH White est.     | 85%              | Total population data from California's adjusted 2020 Census data. Citizen Voting Age Population, Age, Immigration, and other demographics from the 2020-2024 American Community Survey and Special Tabulation 5-year data. Turnout and Registration data from California Statewide Database. "Latino" figures calculated by NDC using Census Bureau's Latino undercount by surname estimate. |                                   |              |
|                               | NH Black          | 1%               |   |                                   |              |
| Voter Turnout (Nov 2024)      | Total             | 5,642            |   |                                   |              |
|                               | Latino est.       | 14%              |   |                                   |              |
|                               | Spanish-Surnamed  | 12%              |   |                                   |              |
|                               | Asian-Surnamed    | 2%               |   |                                   |              |
|                               | Filipino-Surnamed | 1%               |   |                                   |              |
| NH White est.                 | 83%               |                  |   |                                   |              |
| NH Black est.                 | 1%                |                  |   |                                   |              |

# Socio-Economic Demographics



There are no geographic concentrations of Asian-Americans, African-Americans, or Native Americans in the city. In small jurisdictions, Census socio-economic data can have large margins of error.

# Defining Neighborhoods

**1<sup>st</sup> Question: How do you describe or name the area where you live?**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Question: What are its geographic boundaries?**

**What other neighborhoods are there?**

**Examples of physical features defining a neighborhood boundary:**

- Natural neighborhood dividing lines, such as highway or major roads, rivers, canals and/or hills
- Areas around parks or schools
- Other neighborhood landmarks



# Defining Communities of Interest

California Elections Code Section 21130(c)(2):

**A “community of interest” is a population that shares common social or economic interests that should be included within a single district for purposes of its effective and fair representation.**

The shared interests may include (but are not limited to):

- ❑ Shared public policy concerns such as education, public safety, public health, environment, housing, transportation, and access to social services. cultural districts;
- ❑ Shared socioeconomic characteristics;
- ❑ Similar voter registration rates and participation rates; and /or
- ❑ Shared histories.

Definitions of Communities of Interest may not include relationships with political parties, incumbents, or political candidates.

# Public Mapping and Map Review Tools

- **Different tools for different purposes**
- **Different tools for different levels of technical skill and interest**
  1. Simple “review draft maps” tool
  2. Easy-to-use “Draw your neighborhood” tool
  3. Paper-based simple “Draw a draft map” tool
  4. Powerful, data-rich online “Draw a draft map” tool

Whether you use the powerful online mapping tool, the paper kit, or just draw on a napkin, we welcome your maps!

# Simple Map Review Tool

## Online Interactive Review Map

- ESRI's "ArcGIS Online" – similar to Google Maps in ease of use
- Used to review, analyze and compare maps, not to create them
- Includes overlays of "community of interest" and other data



# Draw Your Neighborhood Tool

## Paper PDF Download

- Draw the boundaries of your neighborhood or community of interest.
- Submit a statement describing the neighborhood or community.

**Capitola 2026 Districting "Draw Your Neighborhood" Map**

Use this map to draw the boundaries of your neighborhood and/or community of interest. These areas will be used as building blocks to create and evaluate draft Council election district maps.

On the back or in an email, please describe what geographic, socio-economic, and/or policy concern unites and defines your neighborhood or community of interest.

The smaller the neighborhood or community of interest, the easier it is for mappers to keep it undivided in one district.

You may submit more than one map. When finished, please submit your map to the City Clerk. You can hand-deliver or mail your map, or simply take a photo and email it:

[districts@cityofcapitola.gov](mailto:districts@cityofcapitola.gov)  
City Hall  
420 Capitola Ave  
Capitola, CA 95010

National Demographic Corporation, May 7, 2020

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# Simple Map Drawing Tool

## Paper “Public Participation Kit”

- For those without internet access or who prefer paper
- Total Population Counts only – no demographic numbers

**Capitola 2026 Districting "Public Participation Kit" Map**

An online version of this map that allows you to zoom in and out for more detail is available as a link from the City website.

Each number indicates the total population of that "population unit" area. Each district must have essentially equal population. The population of each of 4 districts must be close to 2,487, with no more than a 248 difference between the largest and smallest. The population of each of 5 districts must be close to 1,990, with no more than a 199 difference between the largest and smallest.

Please use a thick dark-colored pen to draw your map.

You may submit more than one map. When finished, please submit your map to the City Clerk. You can hand-deliver or mail your map, or simply take a photo and email it:

districts@cityofcapitola.gov  
City Hall  
420 Capitola Ave  
Capitola, CA 95010

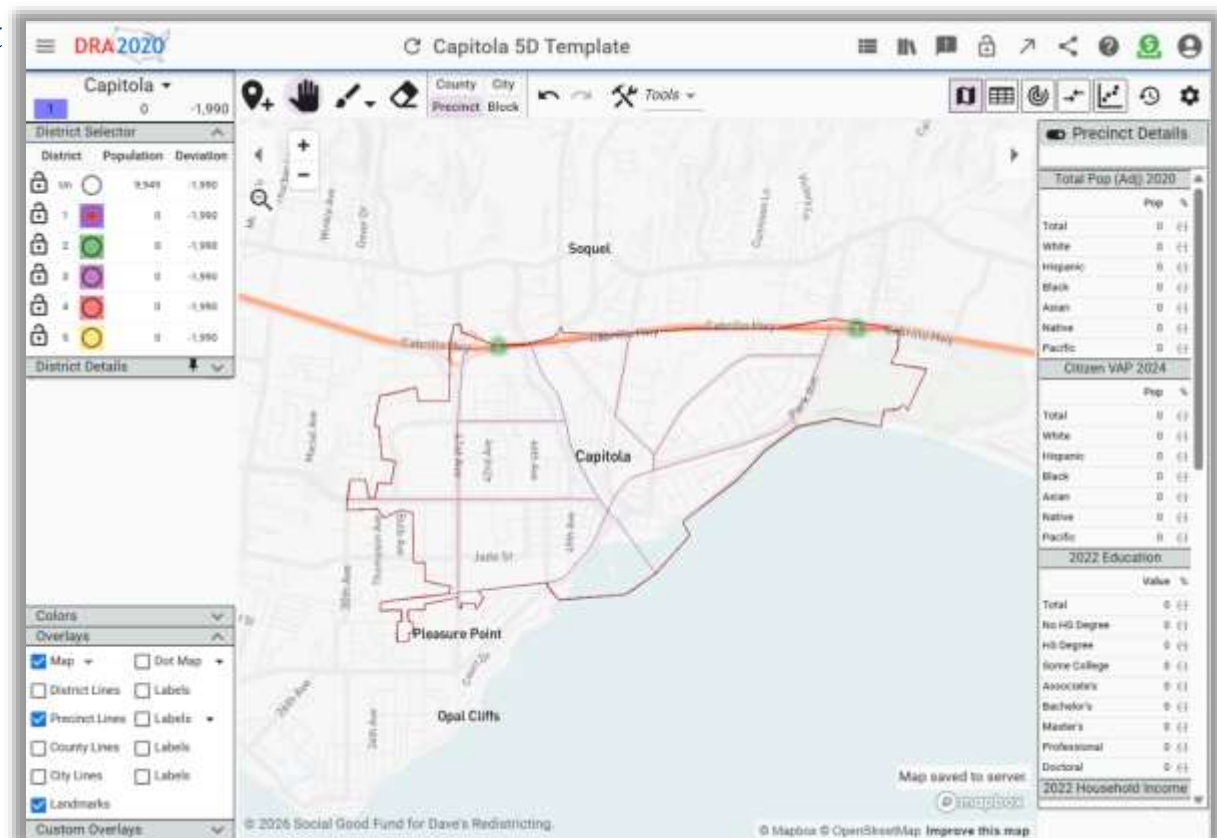
Your name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Your phone or email: \_\_\_\_\_

Mapdata: Thomograph Corporation, May 5, 2016

# Online Map Drawing Tool

Simple “paintbrush & eraser” tool. A 4-minute “how-to” video is on the website.

- Full demographic data available
- Create, collaborate and share your map
- **Remember:** you must send in the link to your map when you finish or the City has no way to know you drew a map.



# Four vs Five Districts

# Four or Five Districts?

## Current System:

- Voters currently vote for five Councilmembers
- Each year, the five Councilmembers decide on a Mayor for the next year
- Commonly referred to as a “rotating Mayor”

## “Citywide Elected Mayor” Alternative:

- The Mayor post would appear on the ballot as a separate office
- Voters would elect their district’s Councilmember every four years and a Mayor every 2 or every 4 years
- No major change in Mayor’s powers: the city remains a Council – Manager form of government

## Options:

Option 1: keep the current “rotating Mayor” system and draw 5 Council Districts

Option 2: change to an “Elected Mayor” system and draw 4 Council Districts

# Council Dynamics

## Five Districts

- Can encourage respect and cooperation among Councilmembers
  - Future turn as Mayor encourages cooperation when out of office
- Leadership perspective is not limited to single person for four years
- Leadership perspective is not limited to a single person for four years
- Can avoid strain over roles between Mayor and City Manager

## Four Districts + Mayor

- Provides a more consistent and prominent ceremonial leader
- Provides leadership continuity for staff
- Stronger representation in regional agencies
- More opportunity for local to win County or State Legislative office
  - Citywide Mayor has a larger “base” of voters

# Average Population per District

|              | Four<br>Districts | Five<br>Districts |
|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Total Pop    | 2,487             | 1,990             |
| Voter Reg    | 1,751             | 1,401             |
| 2024 Turnout | 1,411             | 1,128             |
| 2022 Turnout | 1,116             | 893               |

When the City's small population is divided among districts, five districts increases the risk that if there are 3 or 4 candidates in a district a Councilmember could be elected with as few as 300 votes.

# Impact on Voters and Councilmembers

## Five Districts

- Provides opportunities to expand the knowledge and experience of city council members beyond just their district
  - Less important in small cities
- Eliminates there being more than one representative from a single district
  - The mayor and a Council member

## Four Districts + Mayor

- Allows all voters to vote in a city election every two years
- Elective Mayor provides constituents with two representatives who must earn their vote
  - The mayor and a Council member
  - It only takes one more vote to get a majority of the Council to support a proposal

# Mayor's Term

If a Citywide-elected Mayor is chosen, the city must decide if the term will be 2 or 4 years:

## Four-Year Term

- Gives an advantage to Council members whose terms do not match the Mayor's (they can run for Mayor without giving up their seat)
- Provides stability in leadership
- Less burdensome on a mayor who is otherwise employed
- Reduces cost to administer elections in non-Mayoral years

## Two-Year Term

- Fairness provides all Council members the opportunity to run for Mayor without giving up their Council seat
- Increases direct accountability to the voters

# Discussion

# Your Turn:

1. Do you prefer 5 districts or 4 districts with a Citywide-elected Mayor?
2. What area do you consider your neighborhood?
3. What are your “communities of interest”?
4. Any other questions about the process, criteria, maps, or any other part of this process?

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# Share Your Thoughts

## Website

[CityOfCapitola.gov/1001/District-Based-Elections](http://CityOfCapitola.gov/1001/District-Based-Elections)

## Phone

(831) 475-7300

## Email

[districts@cityofcapitola.gov](mailto:districts@cityofcapitola.gov)