



City of Mesa  
Redistricting  
Commission



Redistricting 101  
June 16, 2021

# Overview

This presentation will cover a range of topics and expand on the technical aspects of the redistricting process.

- What is Redistricting?
- State and Federal Voting Rights Act
- What is Gerrymandering?
- Traditional Redistricting Principles
- Census Data

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- **What is Redistricting?**
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- What is Gerrymandering?
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# What is Redistricting?

Redistricting is at its core the act of equalizing population among districts.

This is important in order to meet two requirements - one constitutional, one from Supreme Court precedent:

- *Equal Representation (14<sup>th</sup> Amendment)* - how effective any resident can be at advocating for themselves or being represented within a jurisdiction.
- *One Person One Vote* - equal ability to elect a candidate of choice.

# What is Redistricting?

Redistricting has changed significantly over the years as federal and state laws, norms, best practices, and public opinion has transformed.

In Federal Law:

- Elimination of part of the Voting Rights Act
- Supreme Court Decisions
- HR1 – currently in Congress

# What is Redistricting?

Redistricting has changed significantly over the years as federal and state laws, norms, best practices, and public opinion has transformed.

## In Public Opinion / Media:

- 97% of Voters agree that “local government should be required to have transparent / open redistricting.”
- Media and Community Based Organizations have become much more adept at covering redistricting.

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- **Federal Voting Rights Act**
- What is Gerrymandering?
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# What is the Voting Rights Act?

The Voting Rights Act is federal law that seeks to remedy racial disenfranchisement. It has two sections impacting redistricting:

**Section 2** – Majority Minority Districts

**Section 5** – Preclearance (inactive)



# What is the Voting Rights Act?

The Voting Rights Act Section 2 is enforced when an jurisdiction meets certain preconditions:

- 1) A minority group must be sufficiently large and geographically compact to comprise a majority of the district;
- 2) The minority group must be politically cohesive (it must demonstrate a pattern of voting for the same candidates, also known as “block voting”); and,
- 3) A majority of voters vote sufficiently as a bloc usually to defeat the minority group’s preferred candidate.

# What is the Voting Rights Act?

Determining Section 2 obligation requires legal counsel and sometimes a racially polarized voting analysis.

- Does the minority population qualify under Section 2?
- Is the proposed district a sufficient remedy – is it an “effective” majority minority district?
- Is there a claim for a coalition district?
- *Without Section 2, a community of interest can still be supported but race cannot be a predominant factor in drawing lines.*

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# What is Gerrymandering?

## The Gerrymander

The term Gerrymander came from a cartoon depicting a rather serpentine looking district created by Governor Elbridge Gerry in Massachusetts.

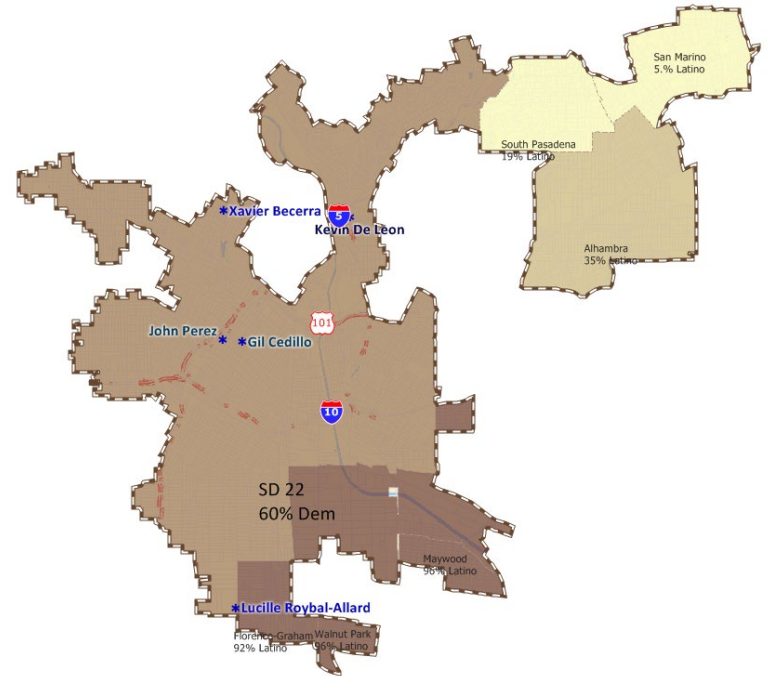


# What is Gerrymandering?

## the Gerrymander

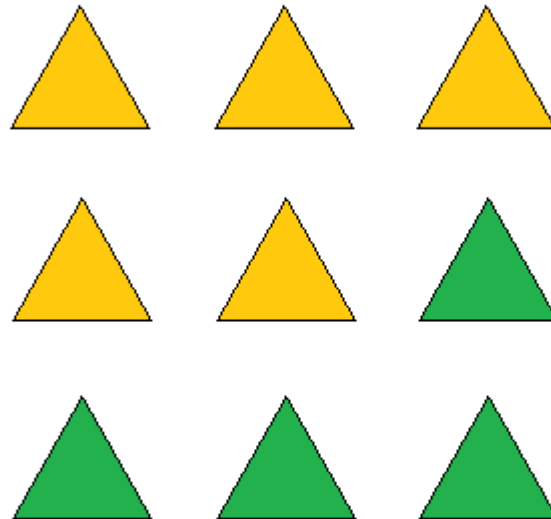
There are more recent examples of gerrymandering, even in California.

This 2001 Senate District is a great example.



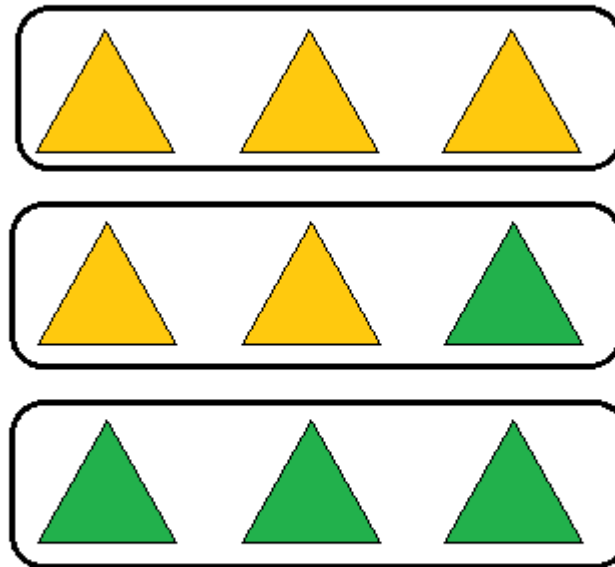
# What is Gerrymandering?

How does gerrymandering work?



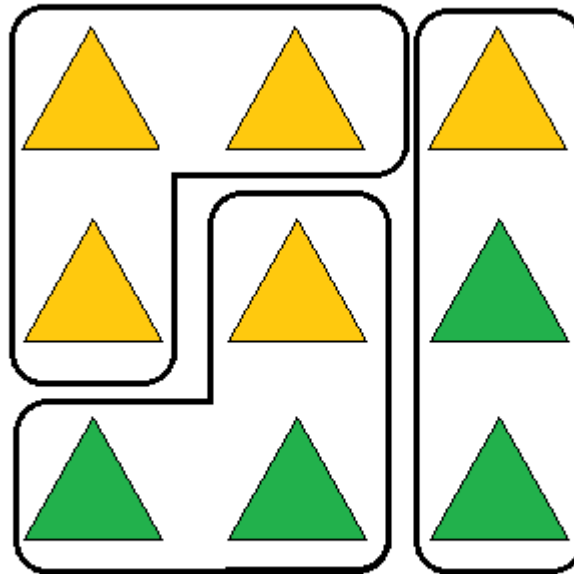
# What is Gerrymandering?

How does gerrymandering work?



# What is Gerrymandering?

How does gerrymandering work?





# What is Gerrymandering?

## Types of Gerrymanders

The two primary types of gerrymanders are Partisan and Racial, but there are more.

**Partisan Gerrymandering** – current Supreme Court has determined these *non-justiciable* but some state and local laws have stepped in to ban them.

**Racial Gerrymandering** – courts have repeatedly found these to be unlawful.

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- **Traditional Redistricting Principles**
- Census Data

# Traditional Redistricting Principles

Preventing a Districting from becoming a Gerrymander

There are a number of criteria that have been used nationally and upheld by courts.

- Relatively equal size - people, not citizens
- Contiguous – districts should not hop/jump
- Maintain “*communities of interest*”
- Keep districts compact – appearance/function

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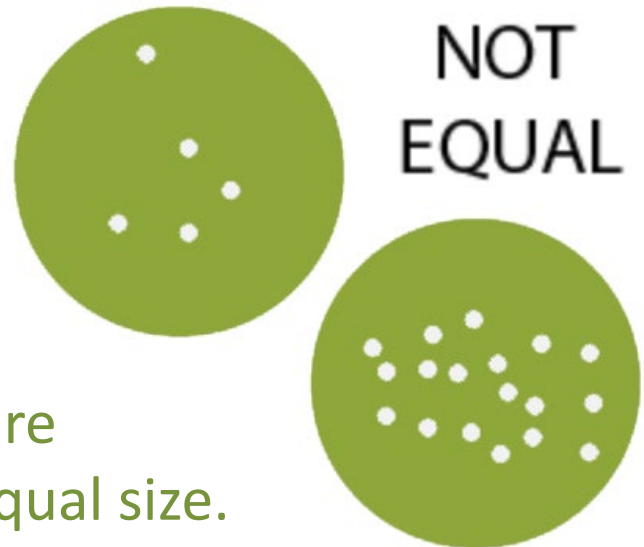
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# Equal Population

## Utilizing the U.S. Census Decennial File

What is “equal” population has been a key subject in redistricting litigation.

- Population Equality is based on “People” not citizens or voters or other metrics.
- The metric used is called “deviation” which is a measure of how close a district is to equal size.

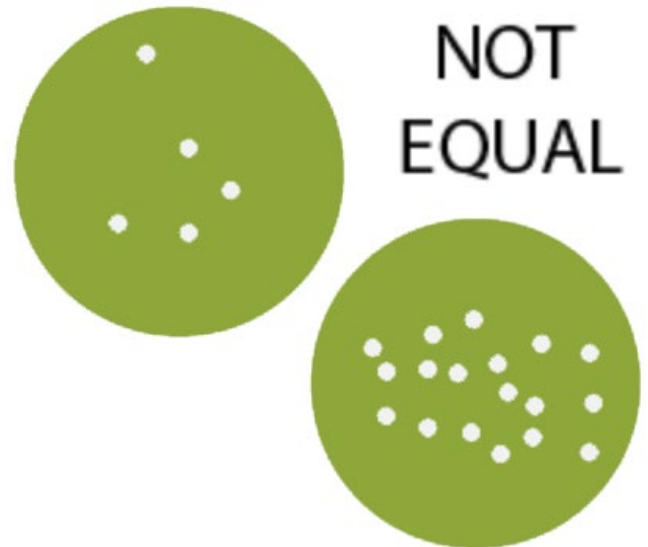


# Equal Population

## Utilizing the U.S. Census Decennial File

What is “equal” population has been a key subject in redistricting litigation?

- Congress: 1 Person
- Local Govt: 10%
- Legislative/others: 1%-5% or other more restrictive by choice.

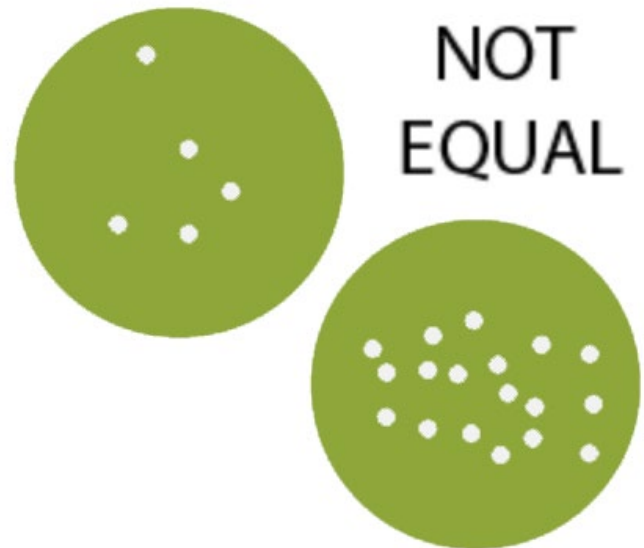


# Equal Population

## Utilizing the U.S. Census Decennial File

What is “equal” population has been a key subject in redistricting litigation.

- Equality is Required
- *Strict adherence to a numeric goal for equality beyond what is required is not necessarily better.*



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# Contiguity

Two definitions for what is contiguous

Contiguity should be thought of as “literal” and “functional.”

- An area that is one whole piece is “literally contiguous.”
- An area that represents how the population functions or how people are connected is “functionally contiguous.”



# Contiguity

Two definitions for what is contiguous

Contiguity should be thought of as “literal” and “functional.”

- Treasure Island: not literally contiguous to San Francisco, but is “functionally contiguous”
- Two houses on either side of the 101 could be literally contiguous, but not functionally.



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# Communities of Interest

Bringing like people together for representation

A community of interest includes ethnic and language minorities and other groups as discussed.

- Many more, including:
  - LGBTQ+ Communities
  - Senior Citizens or Students
  - Downtown / Urban
  - Rural or Agricultural
  - Homeowners or Renters

# Communities of Interest

Bringing like people together for representation

What are you looking for in trying to judge the applicability of a Community of Interest to the redistricting process?

- Group with shared culture / characteristics
- Geographic Nature / Density / Ability to be mapped
- Relationship to Agency / Policies

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# Compactness

Determining what is “compact”

The measure of compactness can get complicated.

- Ratio of the circumference of a district and the area of a district.
- Measuring the number of distinct straight lines the number of kinks and bends.
- Simply outlawing funny shapes.

NOT  
COMPACT





# Additional Redistricting Rules

Criteria required by the Mesa Redistricting Commission

From Article 2, Section 201 of the Mesa City Charter:

The redrawing of district boundaries shall not remove the residence of an incumbent councilmember from the district he was elected to represent during his term in that office.

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# The Mechanics of Redistricting

## Census Data

Census Files come in two parts:

**Geography** – the underlying framework of the data

**Data** – the counts of population and demographics

And they can convey different information:

**Point in Time** – Decennial Census

**Multi-year Averages** – Trends/Estimates

# The Mechanics of Redistricting

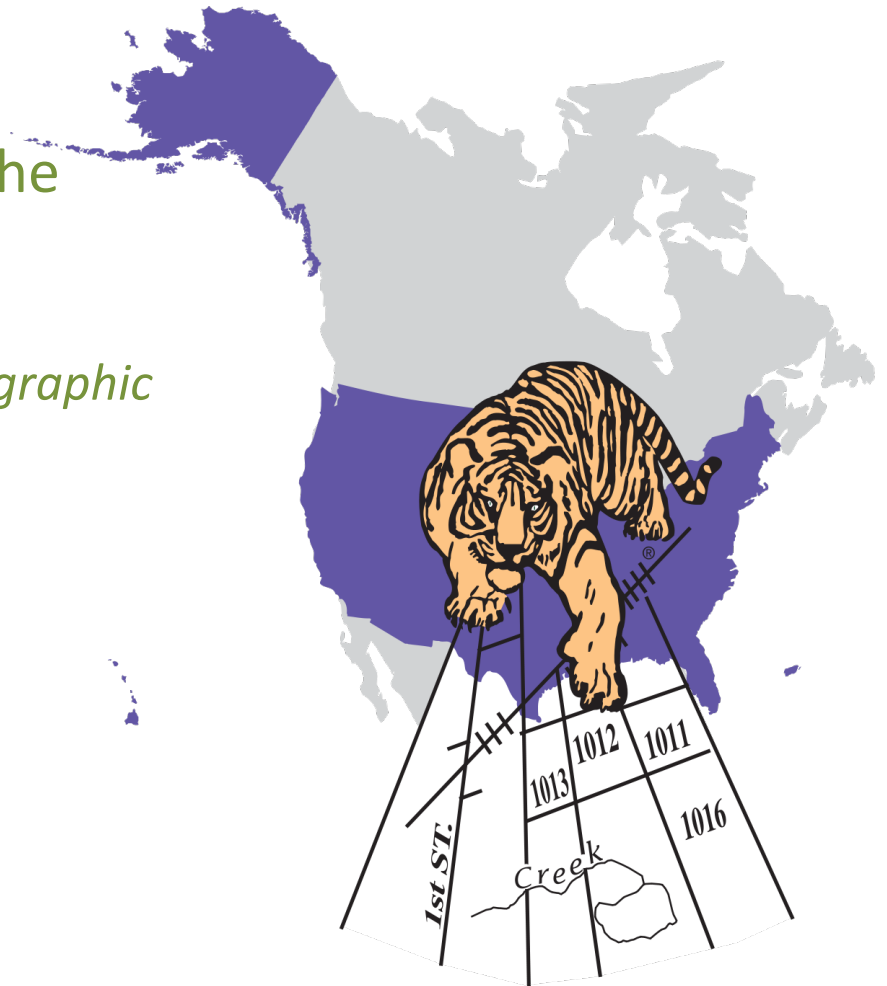
## Census Data

The Geography is called the  
TIGER Files

- *Topologically Integrated Geographic  
Encoding and Referencing*

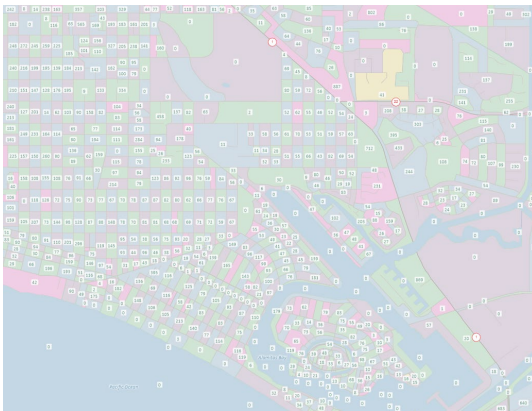
- *Nested geographic units*

- *Block*
- *Block Group*
- *Tract*

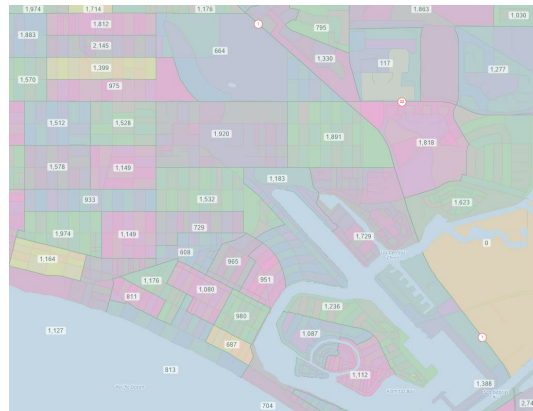


# The Mechanics of Redistricting

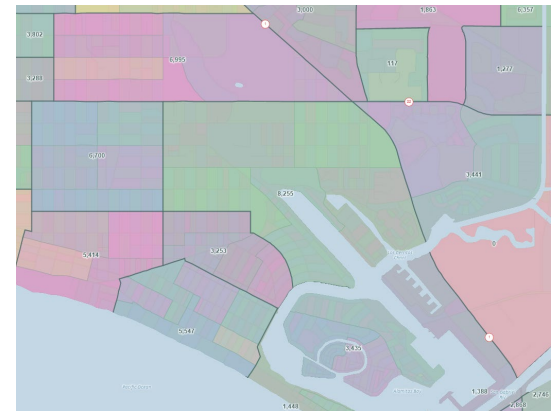
## Census Data



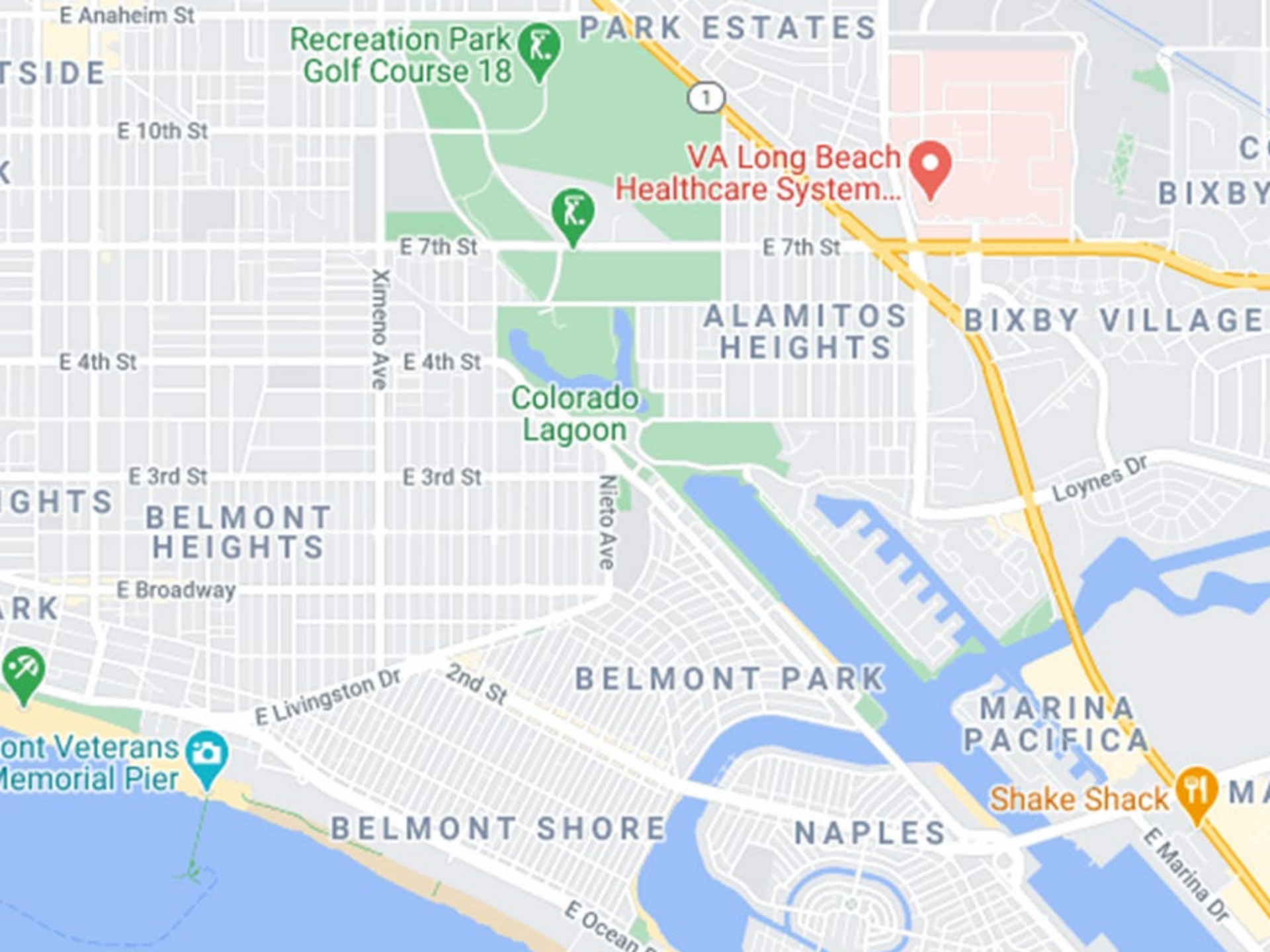
Census Blocks



Census Block Groups



Census Tracts



Recreation Park  
Golf Course 18

PARK ESTATES



VA Long Beach  
Healthcare System...



BIXBY

E 7th St

E 7th St

E 4th St

E 4th St

ALAMITOS  
HEIGHTS

BIXBY VILLAGE

Colorado  
Lagoon

Nieto Ave

E 3rd St

E 3rd St

BELMONT  
HEIGHTS

Loynes Dr

E Broadway

PARK

BELMONT PARK

MARINA  
PACIFICA

Mont Veterans  
Memorial Pier



E Livingston Dr

2nd St

Shake Shack



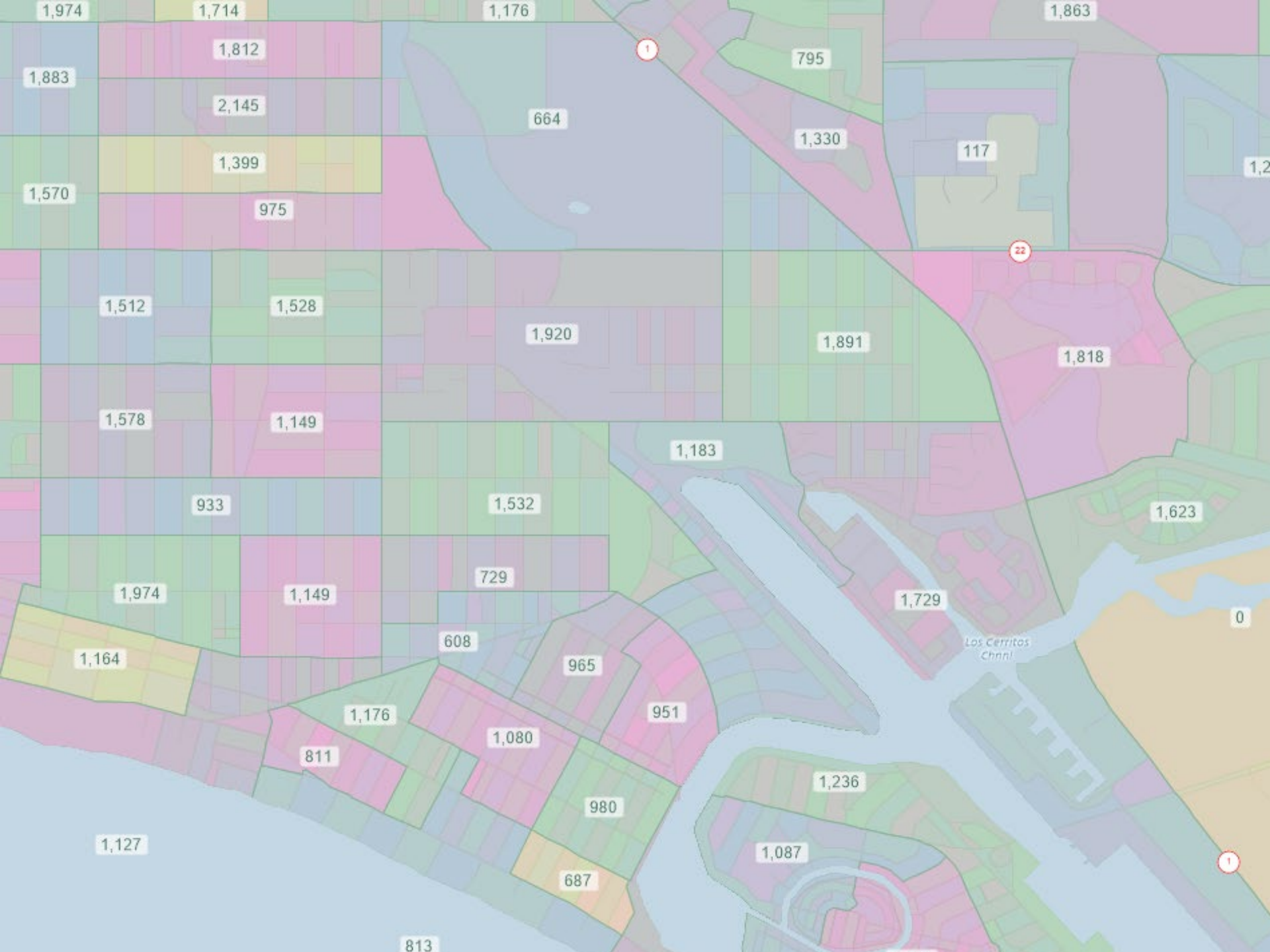
BELMONT SHORE

NAPLES

E Ocean Blvd

E Marina Dr





1,974

1,714

1,176

1,863

1,883

1,812

2,145

664

795

1,570

1,399

975

1,330

117

1,2

1,512

1,528

1,920

1,891

1,818

1,578

1,149

1,183

933

1,532

1,623

1,974

1,149

729

1,729

0

1,164

608

965

Los Cerritos Chnnl

1,176

1,080

951

811

980

1,236

1,127

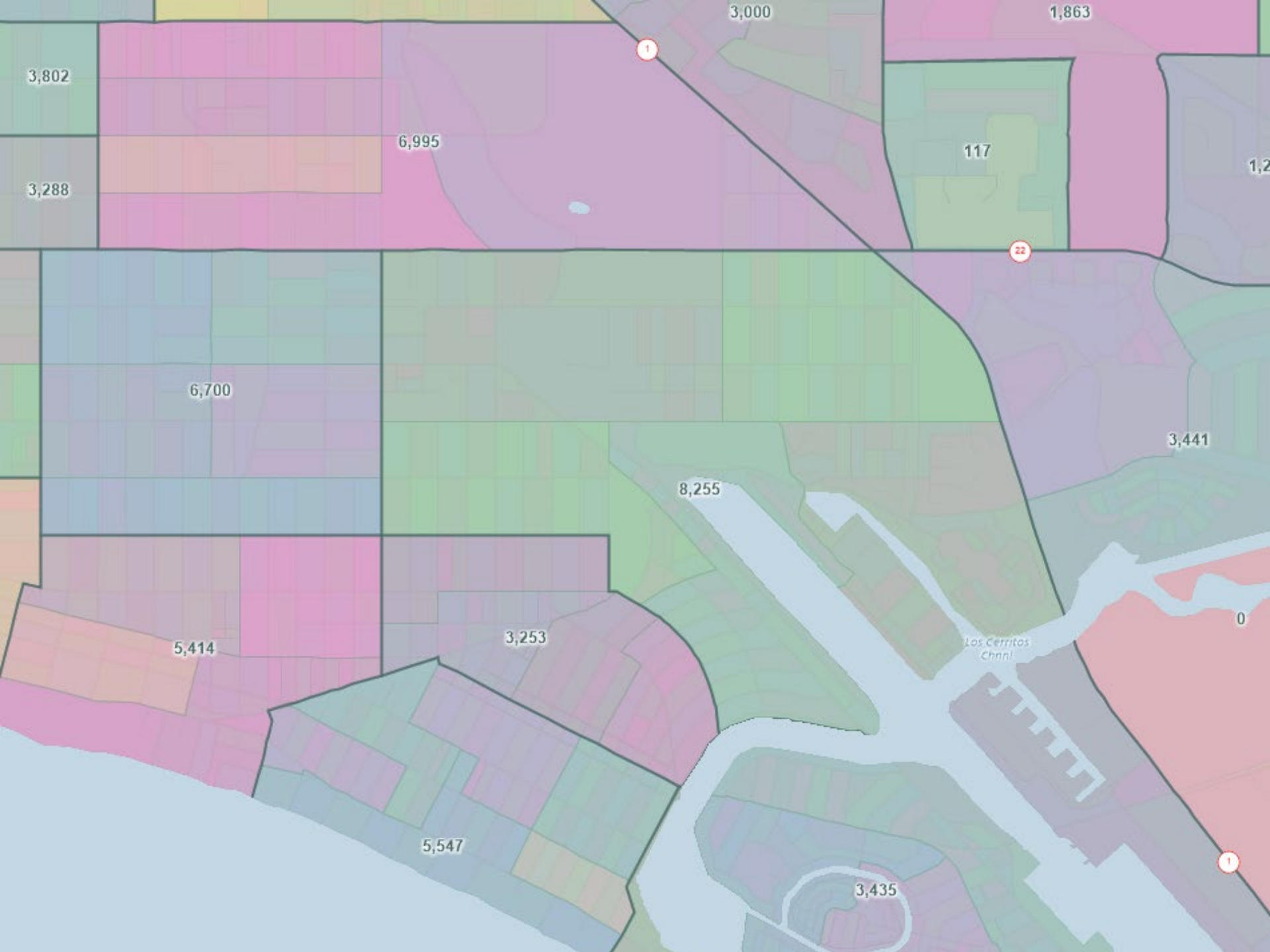
687

1,087

813

1





# The Mechanics of Redistricting

## Census Data

Two different datasets most commonly used in redistricting:

- PL 94-171 - the Decennial Census File
  - Census Block Geography
  - Total Population Counts for April 1, 2020, used to determine the size of each district.
  - Required to be released before April 1, 2021, but delayed until September 30<sup>th</sup>, with a “legacy” dataset by August 16<sup>th</sup>

# The Mechanics of Redistricting

## Census Data

Two different datasets most commonly used in redistricting:

- American Community Survey (ACS)
  - Census Block Group and Census Tract or larger geographies
  - Results in estimated data that provides more context to the Census results with demographic and socioeconomic info.
  - Provides Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP)

# The Mechanics of Redistricting

## Other Data

When conducting a redistricting, there will be additional outside data sources that might be utilized in the analysis of districts - *most effectively if in the Census geography.*

- LGBTQ+: In 2011 Equality California and other groups produced data on LGBTQ+ populations that were used by the Statewide Commission and local jurisdictions.
- Environmental Data: groups like the California League of Conservation Voters provide data on environmental / transportation pollution issues.

# Mesa Redistricting Commission

## Timeline for Upcoming Meetings

June 23<sup>rd</sup> Commission Meeting 10 AM to 12 PM

Aug. 12<sup>th</sup> Outreach Hearing @ 6 PM

Aug. 14<sup>th</sup> Outreach Hearing @ 10 AM

Aug. 17<sup>th</sup> Outreach Hearing @ 6 PM

Aug. 18<sup>th</sup> Outreach Hearing @ Noon

Aug. 25<sup>th</sup> Virtual Outreach Hearing @ 6 PM

Aug. 26<sup>th</sup> Outreach Hearing @ 6 PM

Aug. 28<sup>th</sup> Outreach Hearing @ 10 AM



# REDISTRICTING PARTNERS