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Dallas' redistricting effort needs YOU



By Steve Thompson / Reporter
steve.thompson@dallasnews.com | Bio
1:09 PM on Thu, Apr. 14, 2011 | Permalink

We've written about the upcoming redistricting effort in Dallas and put together an interactive web page to help you make sense of it.

Now it's time to head to a public hearing and tell them what you think.

[Redistricting Public Hearing Flyer](#)

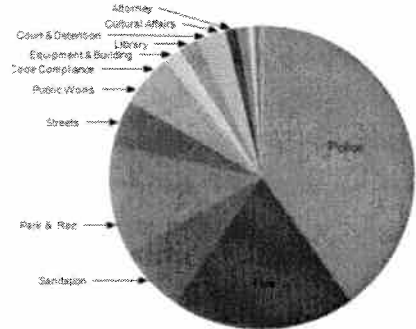
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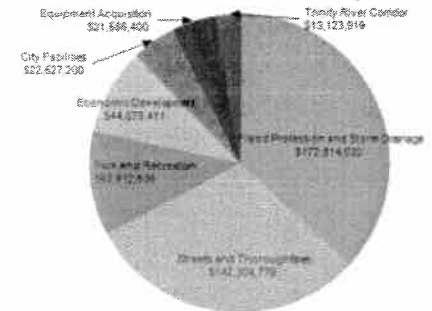
ABOUT THIS BLOG

City Hall reporters Rudolph Bush and Steve Thompson provide political junkies with in-depth features, breaking news and off-beat tidbits through lively coverage of Dallas government. Readers are encouraged to join the conversation.

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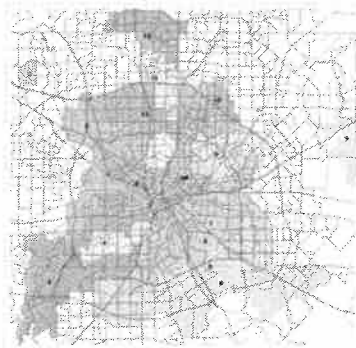
Wednesday, April 13, 2011

Dallas redistricting commission wants public input

by *PegNews* wire

Ten public meetings are scheduled between April 26 and May 24.

DALLAS — The city of Dallas sent word today that the redistricting commission wants to hear from citizens about how to re-map the city. A commission is required to revisit the district maps every 10 years.



See the council district map here.

See the council district maps here.

The public hearings are parsed out by district, but anyone can attend any hearing. They are:

7-9 p.m. Tuesday, April 26: Council districts 4 and 7, Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreation Center

7-9 p.m. Thursday, April 28: Council districts 1 and 3, Kiest Park Recreation Center, 3080 South Hampton Road

7-9 p.m. Tuesday, May 3: Council districts 9 and 10, Dallas First Assembly of God

7-9 p.m. Thursday, May 5: Council districts 2 and 14, Resource Center Dallas

7-9 p.m. Tuesday, May 10: Council districts 5 and 8, Pleasant Oaks Recreation Center

7-9 p.m. Thursday, May 12: Council districts 5 and 8, Paul Quinn College

7-9 p.m. Tuesday, May 17: Council districts 11 and 12, Fretz Library

7-9 p.m. Thursday, May 19: Council districts 4 and 7, Edna Rowe Elementary

2-4 p.m. Saturday, May 21: CITYWIDE, J. Erik Jonsson Central Library

6-8 p.m. Tuesday, May 24: Council districts 6 and 13, Park Forest Library

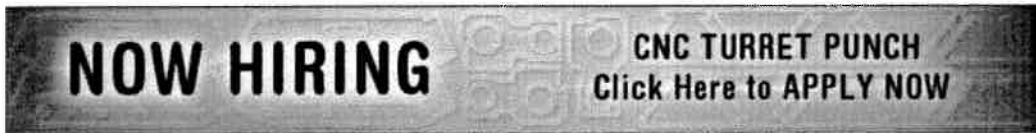
Source: *City of Dallas*

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Redistricting's impact

By Letter to the Editor
letterstoeditor@dallasnews.com
5:53 PM on Wed., Apr. 13, 2011 | Permalink

Re: "Local redistricting -- the real story," by Sharon Grigsby, dallasmorningviewsblog.dallasnews.com.
 Doesn't gerrymandering districts to ensure that targeted minority votes are not diluted actually dilute votes of every other ethnic group within the district?
 If only a Hispanic can fairly represent Hispanics, what about all the other ethnic groups that are unfortunate enough to live in the Hispanic district? Are they supposed to resign themselves to not being fairly represented? If the counterargument is that they will be fairly represented, why do we have to gerrymander districts in the first place?
 Gerrymandering districts just takes a perceived wrong and turns it on another group.

John Hufstedler, Garland


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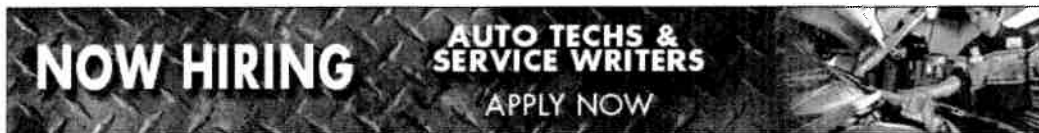
 Repub
 8:14 AM on 4/14/2011
 It's called the Voting Rights Act, the last Reconstruction Act still in force.

Score: 1 Reply

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 jespur62

Score: 4 Reply



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City Council redistricting hearings planned for two Oak Cliff sites



By Roy Appleton/Reporter
rappleton@dallasnews.com | Bio
3:16 PM on Wed., Apr. 13, 2011 | Permalink

The city's 2011 Redistricting Commission will hold public hearings in the coming weeks to receive public comment on the redrawing of the 14 City Council districts.

Here's the schedule for Oak Cliff:

- 7 to 9 p.m. April 28, Kiest Park Recreation Center, 3080 S. Hampton Road.
- 7 to 9 p.m. May 12, Paul Quinn College, 3837 Simpson Stuart Road.

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ABOUT THIS BLOG

Reporter Roy Appleton covers Oak Cliff and southern Dallas. The community is encouraged to contribute by joining the conversation on this blog

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City Hall blog: Dallas council OKs cheaper version of McDermott Bridge

Teen charged in Oak Cliff stabbing of mother, toddler

United Methodist volunteers spruce up homes of elderly, disabled Dallas residents

Dallas Housing Authority: 15,000 voucher applications 'irretrievably lost' in website snafu

Former South Oak Cliff student told he'll get diploma — five years after Dallas ISD officials denied it

A chip on their shoulders: Students at A. Maceo Smith High win \$10,000 prize from Dallas-based Frito-Lay

Thousands expected to seek rental vouchers as Dallas Housing Authority accepts first applications since 2006

City Hall blog: Dallas council to discuss allowing digital billboards

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« Oak Cliff update: A new approach to the I-30 bridge. finally a diploma for former SOC High student | Main



As candidates vie for the job, has interest waned in becoming Dallas mayor?

By RUDOLPH BUSH

Staff Writer

rbush@dallasnews.com

Published 12 April 2011 11:58 PM

The pay's not great, the hours stink and your bosses are going to scrutinize and criticize every move you make.

Who wouldn't want to be mayor of Dallas?

Granted, it comes with a fancy title, a bully pulpit and the best all-access pass to the city you can get.

But especially in the four years to come, the job is shaping up to be one of the most difficult you could ask for. And there's a palpable sense that interest in being the city's titular leader has declined.

Perhaps that's why just four people decided to run for the office after former Mayor Tom Leppert finally made it clear in January that he didn't plan to stick around for a second term.

One of those candidates, former Pizza Hut chief executive Mike Rawlings, has said he grappled for a long time with whether he wanted to get into the race.

"I wasn't planning on running, but ... I was driving with my son and asked him for advice. He said, 'You are at that ethical fork in the road: You can either keep doing what you're doing or you can help people,'" he said.

Former Police Chief David Kunkle turned down several requests to run before he suddenly jumped into the race in January.

He said he made the decision after he decided voters needed an alternative to potential candidates he believed held views too close to Leppert's.

Kunkle knew the difficulties of being mayor but didn't view them as an obstacle, he said.

"I've had difficult jobs every place I've been. In almost any community, being police chief is, if not the hardest job, among the top two or three," he said.

Only one of the candidates, former council member Ron Natinsky, spent months laying the groundwork for a campaign in the hope of becoming the city's next mayor.

Compare that with four years ago, when Leppert ran to replace the departing Laura Miller.

The race began much earlier, with Miller's decision in mid-2006 not to stand for re-election. At the start of the campaign, about 20 candidates were in the race. And by March 2007, there were at least six people who were considered contenders.

Former council member Ed Oakley lost in a runoff to Leppert.

Many believe that Oakley could have made a strong run again this year, but he opted not to.

He said more candidates might have gotten into the race if Leppert had made public his decision to run for U.S. Senate earlier than he did.

But he's not surprised it's a small field. Whoever wins this year is in for a very difficult term with budget problems, cuts in services and possibly layoffs of more city employees, he said.

"It's really a thankless job the next four years. It's going to be a lot of work, and there is going to be some bloodletting," he said.

The budget troubles will be just one of the big problems the mayor must face.

A tough fight wrapped in racial politics is bound to follow the redistricting process. That alone could affect how all other business at the City Council is conducted.

Repairs to the Trinity levees will be under way, and the city may yet avoid having much of downtown, West Dallas and other areas near the river drawn into a flood plain. But questions still loom about the larger Trinity project, its massive costs and its future.

The council also will face a difficult debate about the city's next bond program. City Hall already is hampered by debt, but arguments will still be waged over how large a bond issue the city will seek and how the scarce dollars will be divided among 14 council districts.

And even ostensibly celebratory events like the opening of the Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge and the Dallas Convention Center hotel will be cause for revisiting doubts about the wisdom of grand projects launched on someone else's watch.

"You will get to cut the ribbon on the bridge, but that's your highlight, if you consider that a highlight. Other than that, there's just not much fun to look forward to," political consultant Lorlee Bartos said.

Of course, no one ever said being mayor was supposed to be fun.

And Max Wells, a former council member and veteran of City Hall politics, recalls plenty of tough times for prior mayors.

"There is some more criticism than in the past, but I don't think it's a significant amount, even though the Internet makes it easier," he said.

But he too senses that interest in being mayor has diminished. That's happened for several reasons, he said.

Yes, the next mayor will preside in difficult times. But Wells said there is also a stain on city government from the investigation that brought down former Mayor Pro Tem Don Hill.

"When bad things happen in the city like that, everybody is smeared by it," he said.

All of the candidates for mayor have said, in some form, that they are running because they love the city and want to see it prosper and grow.

According to Wells, that better be their motivation.

"If you love the people, and you love the city, and you try to do the best you can because you care, it will be a better place for all our families," he said.

THE MAYOR OF DALLAS

Four candidates are hoping to become Dallas' next mayor. The election is May 14. They are:

The Dallas mayor:

Serves a four-year term

Earns \$60,000 a year

Holds one of 15 votes on the City Council

Is the council's only at-large representative

Unlike fellow council members, has individual power to place items on the council agenda

Unlike fellow council members, does not serve on council committees

CHALLENGES FACING THE NEXT MAYOR

BUDGET — The city will be at least \$40 million in the red when it carves out the 2011-12 budget. Few residents want another property tax increase and many are angry about diminished services.

REDISTRICTING — The city must redraw its 14 council districts so they fairly represent neighborhoods and major racial groups. The political fight is expected to be difficult and protracted.

TRINITY RIVER PROJECT — The levees should be under repair, but questions about the larger project remain.

BONDS — Dallas will propose another bond program. The city's next bond issue must be more modest than in years past with scarce dollars split among 14 council districts.

VETERAN COUNCIL — When Tom Leppert became mayor, he had the luxury of a council with many new members and the sense of a fresh start. The next mayor will face established alliances and divisions.

Dallas City Council District Redistricting Underway

By Crispin Lawson, Dallas Political Buzz Examiner

April 12th, 2011 9:51 am CT

Despite its widespread and long-term impact to voting, many residents are as of yet unaware that the City of Dallas is currently engaged in its city council district redistricting process. As with almost all cities in the country, the Dallas city charter requires the city to undergo the redistricting process every ten years once the most recent national census data is available. The purpose is to take into account population and demographic changes since the last drawing of the boundaries in order that districts maintain roughly equal populations and so that they do not violate the Federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 by discriminating against minorities.

That last requirement has caused trouble in Dallas in the past, as from 1975 until 1990 the city's districts were designed to heavily favor whites through a combination of eight district seats and three at-large (a.k.a. elected citywide) seats. Eventually a lawsuit was filled by community activists citing discrimination, and the resulting settlement created the 14 council districts and at-large mayor's seat that the city currently operates under.

The current redistricting process began in 2010 when the city council selected 15 members of the community to serve on the redistricting commission. The first meeting of the commission was held in February of this year, and the entire process is scheduled to run through the fall of 2011. As demonstrated by the events surrounding the creation of Dallas' 14-1 council system, public input is very important to ensure that if the districts are redrawn, they are done so with the interests of residents in mind. Currently, there are eight public hearings scheduled through May. A calendar showing the dates and times can be found here on the city website.

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Once the commission decides on the redrawn district boundaries, the plan will be presented to the mayor, who will in turn present it to the entire city council. The council will have 45 days to adopt or further modify

the plan. After approval by the U.S. Department of Justice, the new district map will be in effect for the next ten years.

Tags: Dallas Council Redistricting, Dallas City Council

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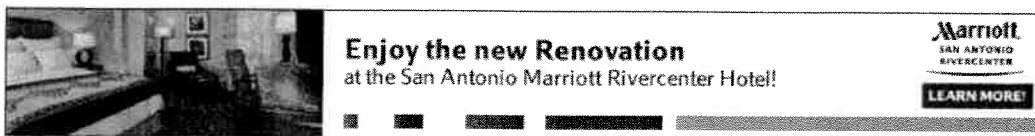
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Local redistricting -- the real story



By Sharon Grigsby/Editor
sgrigsby@dallasnews.com | Bio
4:11 PM on Mon, Apr. 11, 2011 | Permalink

Very important city council redistricting work has begun in Dallas, and our editorial board offered these ideas in yesterday's print edition on what we'd like to see happen.

Local redistricting is a touchy subject -- both for those who are redrawing the lines and for those offering suggestions -- because the commission's aim (and ours) is to look at what's most fair for the next 10 years. That means separate out the personalities and focus just on which maps make the most sense. I believe our first editorial did just that.

Here's what I mean by "separating out the personalities": For example, Judge Vonciel Jones Hill is one of the council members whose districts cover numerous neighborhoods in southern Dallas. I happen to think she's done a better job of looking after all her neighborhoods than have some previous District 5 reps. And I know she likes her district just as it is. But I still feel strongly that Pleasant Grove should be "whole" and under a single council member. That's nothing against Judge Hill.

Most of our editorial involved our No. 1 concern: the long, slivers of districts that make up southern Dallas:

Homeowners who live in the far southeast corner of Dallas reside in City Council District 8. But if their elected representative decides to have a town hall meeting on the west side of the district, those constituents might want to pack a lunch and fuel up the car.

The trek from the area near Belt Line and Seagoville roads to Southwest Center Mall is more than 20 miles. Yet both are part of District 8, which snakes across the southern reaches of Dallas, slicing off corners of several different neighborhoods along the way.

This is just one of the many mysteries of the current council map. The city's 14 districts are a curious collection of incongruous shapes that manage to dice up Dallas in a way that does a disservice to many parts of town.

We also noted what the basic rules of redistricting are:

The 15 commissioners, who include several former council members, have a tough job: They must draw 14 districts with roughly equal population while abiding by the Voting Rights Act to ensure that the electoral strength of minority groups is not diluted. Bolstering Hispanic representation on the council should be a priority, as Latinos now comprise 42 percent of the city's population but have just three seats on the council.

The objective is to create districts that are compact while leaving communities of interest intact.

Then we returned to our biggest concern, those southern Dallas districts:

Start with southern Dallas -- specifically, Pleasant Grove. While several northern council districts are relatively compact, cohesive units, those south of downtown are a hodge-podge of sprawl and illogical lines. For example, District 3 in the southwest nearly encircles District 1. The entire city will benefit when both the north and the south have district lines that lead to more effective local government.

It is Pleasant Grove and the rest of the southeast quadrant that have really gotten short shrift. Pleasant Grove and the neighborhoods immediately north have been carved up among Districts 4, 5, 7 and 8. Pleasant Grove needs a single representative focused on its needs -- not four council members giving the area a portion of their attention.

Consider both communities of interest and actual distances across districts. While no district will or should be homogeneous, neighborhoods with similar needs should be clustered together. In District 7, for example, residents of South Dallas and Fair Park understandably complain that they have little in common with the areas north of Interstate 30, which demand a lot of the council

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ABOUT THIS BLOG

The Dallas Morning News Editorial Board was the first editorial board in the nation to use a blog to openly discuss hot topics and issues among its members and with readers. Our intent is to pull back the curtain on the daily process of producing the unsigned editorials that reflect the opinion of the newspaper, and to share analysis and opinion on issues of interest to board members and invited guest bloggers.

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member's attention.

Commissioners also should weigh the logistical challenges created by districts that span a dozen or more miles from one end to the other. Neither council members nor constituents should be forced to embark on a nearly 30-minute road trip to attend a meeting in the district.

We also noted what seemed like a reasonable point -- a point that I suggested while looking at the map:

Share the wealth. Perhaps the most of peculiar of the council districts is 14. Shaped like a bastardized "W," the district winds its way through the heart of the city, enveloping more than its fair share of landmarks, high-value properties and high-profile neighborhoods -- including Love Field Airport, part of downtown, the areas bordering the Park Cities, Uptown, the M-Streets and Greenville Avenue.

No single district should have an embarrassment of riches -- or a crippling number of challenges.

I happen to think one of the best council members at City Hall represents District 14. And I believe Angela Hunt knows I think that. But, again, I'm trying to push what's best for the city in the long term, not play favorites for a particular council person.

That's why I completely disagree with Jim Schutze's blog post, contending that this is another example of our being in bed with the Citizens' Council. That line of reasoning is just so 1990s. It makes great conspiracy blogging, but it's simply untrue.

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Steve in Garland
8:40 PM on 4/11/2011


You've already stated one of the greatest obstacles to cohesive districts:

"They must draw 14 districts with roughly equal population while abiding by the Voting Rights Act to ensure that the electoral strength of minority groups is not diluted."

At what point may these provisions of the VRA be declared obsolete? Aren't there cities in America which are not under VRA supervision, yet have worse race relations than Dallas? Why is it not a violation of Equal Protection for the Justice Department to exercise omnipotent control over some districts, but not others?

Score: 3

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rke
6:40 PM on 4/11/2011

The District will indeed be withdrawn but one can hardly blame Schutze, who lives there and has seen it go from forgotten to hip largely through several decades of effort from the residents waging a war of survival against their own city hall.

"That line of reasoning is just so 1990s."

Maybe, but you kinda forgot the oughts, through which This Board spent a lot of time carrying water for Mayor Tom and the boys. And demonizing and ridiculing Hunt every time she stood against adding debt for shiny stuff and tax breaks for millionaires.


And the Trinity Tollway and the levees- oh my, as practically the only voice on the council sounding warnings, she was anti growth and anti the future while you guys bought Mayor Tom's nothing-to-see-here line lock, stock and barrel.

Conspiracy blogging? Maybe, but based on history.

So we'll see, but Wylie's right. Tears over closed pool and libraries, the state of the parks and roads and code enforcement are all well and good. But they ring kinda hollow when accompanied by calls for more tax giveaways to the same old crowd.

Score: 2

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DMN Sharon Grigsby
6:20 PM on 4/11/2011

Score: 0

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WylieH -- My best answer is for you to just keep reading us and see if your opinion changes over time. Having been at the newspaper since 1980, I felt a big change when Jim Moroney became publisher (seems like that's been 10 years or so, but I can't say for certain). My tenure in (and reading of) our editorial pages is only seven years old -- since right after Keven Willey took over the pages. I don't disagree with your assessment of our "decades-long history of advocacy on behalf of the DCC" but I wholeheartedly believe that's in the past.

I appreciate your honesty and your taking time to respond. I know it will take a long time for people to really believe ... but I'm willing to keep trying.

2 replies



Melvin Rose
5:59 PM on 4/11/2011

Score: 0

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I'm hoping that the need for a Hispanic district in Dallas means the end to Pete Sessions the way the out of season redistricting of 2003 meant the end of Martin Frost.

1 reply



WylieH
5:44 PM on 4/11/2011

Score: 3

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Sharon, I hear what you're saying re: Jim Schutze. However, there's a reason that the Dallas Morning News' editorial opinions are considered suspect.

Readers have good reason to be circumspect when it comes to trusting the opinions (and, at times, news coverage) of the Dallas Morning News. I've noticed a change for the better at the DMN over the last 12 - 18 months, but I still am not yet at the point where I believe the Dallas Morning News has abandoned its decades-long history of aggressive advocacy on behalf of the Dallas Citizens Council and related entities, and I know many other readers feel the same way.

The Dallas Morning News is best read with a cynical eye.

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The Dallas Morning News Wants to Break Up District 14. Wow, What a Surprise.

ArtChoices ▶

By **Jim Schutze**

published: Mon., Apr. 11 2011 @ 11:24AM



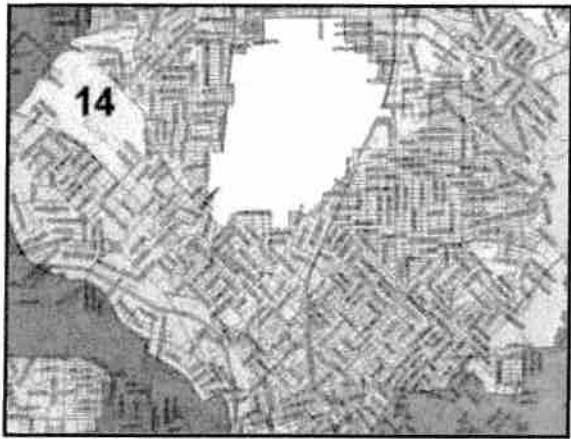
Oh, so now it starts. Here it comes. Camouflaged in a lot of pompous blather about a fair city council redistricting process, *The Dallas Morning News* is already waving the banner for chopping up the East Dallas city council district.

Should have seen that one coming. East Dallas is a sharp thorn in the ass for *The News* and its buddies and hey-boys on the Dallas Citizens Council.

District 14, represented by Angela Hunt, happens to be by far the city's most successful council district in terms of building strong neighborhoods. You'd think the money guys would love District 14. Real estate values have gone up more there over the long haul than in any other part of town.

Ah, but there's a problem. Beginning even before Hunt took the seat, East Dallas, where I live, has always succeeded by fighting City Hall. If it had been up to Dallas City Hall, there would be big fat stinking double-decked freeways jammed with suburban commuters where some of the city's coolest neighborhoods now stand.

But *Mother Snooze* doesn't like that. She doesn't like people who fight City Hall. So now my part of town, which was treated like a throw-away slum 15 years ago, apparently has become a bastion of privilege that must be torn apart in the ongoing redistricting process.



District 14, home of some touchy bastards.

Redistricting is where they take the numbers from the new census and decide how to redraw the lines to make sure each district still has the same number of people in it. It has to be done every 10 years by law. The *News* thinks, as long as we're at it, now's the chance to teach that damned East Dallas a lesson.

In an editorial Sunday, *The News* said, "Perhaps the most peculiar of the council districts is 14. Shaped like a bastardized 'W,' the district wends its way through the heart of the city, enveloping more than its fair share of landmarks, high-value properties and high-profile neighborhoods -- including Love Field Airport, part of downtown, the areas bordering the Park Cities, Uptown, the M-Streets and Greenville Avenue. No single district should have an embarrassment of riches -- or a crippling number of challenges."

Scuuuuuuureeeew yeeeeew! A bastardized W? I'm looking at a map of the council districts right now. District 8 looks a bastardized E that somebody knocked on its ass. District 2 -- look, I hate to say it, I don't want to hurt anybody's feelings over there, but your district looks kind of like a bastardized F. And District 6 ... man! It just looks like a bastard.

So we have to tear 14 apart because it looks like a W? Nah. Forget it. The best thing this city has going for it is strong neighborhoods, and the only reason it has strong neighborhoods is because we've got people smart enough and tough enough to fight City Hall and fight *Mother Snooze*, mostly in East Dallas.

Bring it on. If really bastardy people are what you people want, we've got plenty. Extras! That's probably why we're still here.

Showing 2 comments



Alexander 53 minutes ago

Well should Bluffview and Hollywood Heights be in the same district? And should we allow Pleasant Grove to have no live-in representatives? The whole map needs to be rethought.



Sharon Boyd 5 minutes ago

Dists 14 and 2 should be divided at Central. Dist 14 keeps the superior E Dallas people. Dist 2 takes Oak Lawn, Bluffview, etc. Both districts would be more compact and neighborhoods in tact.

All 6 Southern Dists 1, 3, 4, 5, 7 8 should be reconfigured into blocked districts running north/south. Dists 4, 5, 8 ribbon from one side of the city to the other. Slicing Pleasant Grove into 4 districts. Councilman Atkins says he put 35,000 miles on his car last year driving his district.

Split the northern most Dists 12 (Natinsky) and 11 (Koop) lengthwise at Preston. Dist 12's growth means it's got to be split anyway. If Dist 6 can exist 10 years from Sylvan (Oak Cliff), W Dallas up to Royal (NW Dallas), even over to Billingsley's boondoggle between Irving & Coppell, Dists 11 and 12 could stretch down through 13 and stil be fairly compact - compared to Dist 6's ridiculous config. Dist 13 could take the NW Dallas part of 6.

Populations of Dists 2 and 14 are so dense that splitting them at Central has always made sense -- same diversity of race, riches, sexual orientation - just would keep Oak Lawn in one district and E Dallas in one district. Of course, E Dallas won't like that because they have controlled 2 districts for 20 years. In Oak Lawn and area east of Central, neighborhoods are cut up between 2 and 14 block by block. The 2001 commission didn't give a whit about neighborhoods just quotas and other stuff pushed by Joe May and Maxine Aaronson.