

December 16, 2021

Honorable Chair Hebrank and Commissioners,

Subject: Suggestions for the 2031 Redistricting

The experience I had attempting to participate in the redistricting “process,” was disturbing. The race-baiting and bullying served to chill public comment. This along with the identical rhetoric used by some of the participants, the apparent support of Biocom and the involvement of known lobbyists and fundraisers, led us to ask early on if there were any lobbying or financial disclosures required for folks participating in the Redistricting effort.

There are none, and it may take a Grand Jury investigation to provide recommendations for changes to this process. This should be a resident driven process. It was clear this Redistricting effort was not.

Before the 2030 Redistricting process the City should act to implement reforms to ensure that the next redistricting is transparent and dedicated to the residents. It must not be influenced by unfettered development interests.

It was stunning to have a sitting Councilmember testify for one of the maps. Future Redistricting efforts should not allow any participation by elected City officers or their staffs.

I support Mitz Lee’s requests for reform and especially for a formal complaint process. I believe that had Ms. Lee remained on the Redistricting Commission, the Final Map would have been different.

Why was the preliminary map that was approved 8-1 on October 29 abandoned in favor of either one of two maps that forced all of University City and Torrey Hills into District 6? Is it possible that both of the alternative maps were supported by Biocom in its objective to have all of its member companies in one district? Why was this economic gerrymandering that split UCSD and the adjacent neighborhood allowed?

For future Redistricting Commissions, the folks who serve on the Commission should have a better understanding of the geography of the City and its neighborhoods. A striking example of this unfamiliarity with the City is the inclusion of Rancho Encantada in District 6 when it is completely unconnected to the rest of District 6.

It is also imperative that if there is a “mapping consultant”, the consultant must know the City of San Diego and serve in a strictly advisory role – doing what they are instructed to do and nothing else. Additionally, the mapping tool should show the actual boundaries of the planning areas and neighborhoods in addition to where the census blocks are. Members of the public spent too much time trying to get incorrect boundaries fixed and in the case of Del Mar Mesa Preserve, it took a concerted effort on behalf of the affected communities to get the actual boundaries in place. This caused unnecessary strife and anxiety for these communities.

I think you will agree with me that there was far too much emphasis on getting the numbers right and not enough time spent respecting communities of interest.

I have the following additional suggestions for the next City Council Redistricting Commission:

- Assess the existing districts in 2030 and determine if the 2021 Final Plan achieved its goals
- Identify the goals that still need work and any new goals
- Seek public input on the goals paying attention to the communities of interest

- Make specific findings for the Map's goals
- Make changes to the Map
- Neighborhoods split in 2021 should be reunited
- Planning areas split in 2021 should be reunited.

Thank you for your volunteer service on behalf of the residents of the City of San Diego. Your professional behavior in the face of some pretty daunting, taunting and bullying testimony was greatly appreciated.

I wonder what you would tell anyone considering serving on the 2030 Redistricting Commission.

Best Regards,

Sherri S. Lightner