

# CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

## BOARD OF ELECTION COMMISSIONERS

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To: Local Election District Review Commission  
From: Board of Election Commissioners  
Date: December 8, 2021  
Re: Cambridge 2020 Re-Precincting Process

The Board of Election Commissioners (the “Commission”) submits this memorandum at the request of the Secretary of State’s office to provide background information on the Cambridge 2020 re-precincting process. The City of Cambridge grew from 105,162 in the 2010 census to 118,403 in 2020. The City is required to maintain 11 wards and the Commission chose to maintain the current 33 precincts, with a target population of 3,588 in each precinct.

On September 2, 2021, the Secretary of State’s office provided a data release packet, including a proposed ward and precinct map. The Commission used the map provided as a starting point but opted to use the Cambridge Geographic Information System Department (“GIS”) to make revisions. The Commission provided GIS with several goals to meet in making revisions:

- Minimize change for voters to the extent possible
- Avoid splitting housing complexes and other communities of interests
- Avoid voters having to cross major thoroughfares to reach their polling location
- Preserve current polling locations within the precincts when possible
- Solve/prevent administrative issues caused by addresses split into multiple precincts

GIS presented draft maps to the Commission at public meetings on September 14, September 22, and September 29. At the public meeting on September 29, a draft map was chosen to post online with a request for public comment to be provided by October 6. The Commission received comment from twelve members of the public. Comments included concerns over a public housing development being in a ward with all of MIT rather than the neighborhood they identify with, and the difficulties this has caused with forming a Ward Committee. There were also concerns over changes in North Cambridge that would have split communities that have voted in the same precinct, and would have required voters to cross railroad tracks to vote.

The Commission addressed these concerns with a new draft map, which was posted online on October 7 with a request for public comment by October 13. After receiving only positive comments, the Commissioners voted to adopt this map on October 13. This was one day after the Joint Committee on Redistricting posted new State House and Senate District maps.

On October 14, the Commission learned that while the three Senate districts would be adjusted to match our new precinct boundaries, the six House districts would not be adjusted, even though the districts would require multiple sub-precincts and would cause administrative problems by splitting addresses into multiple districts.

The Commission submitted a letter to the Joint Committee on Redistricting during the public comment period, requesting tweaks to the House districts with the understanding that the Commission would also adjust the City's lines to match the House district lines wherever possible. The tweaks included specific census blocks that could be moved to prevent sub-precincts or to prevent addresses from being split into different districts. Unfortunately, none of these requested tweaks were included in the amended House district plan released a few days later.

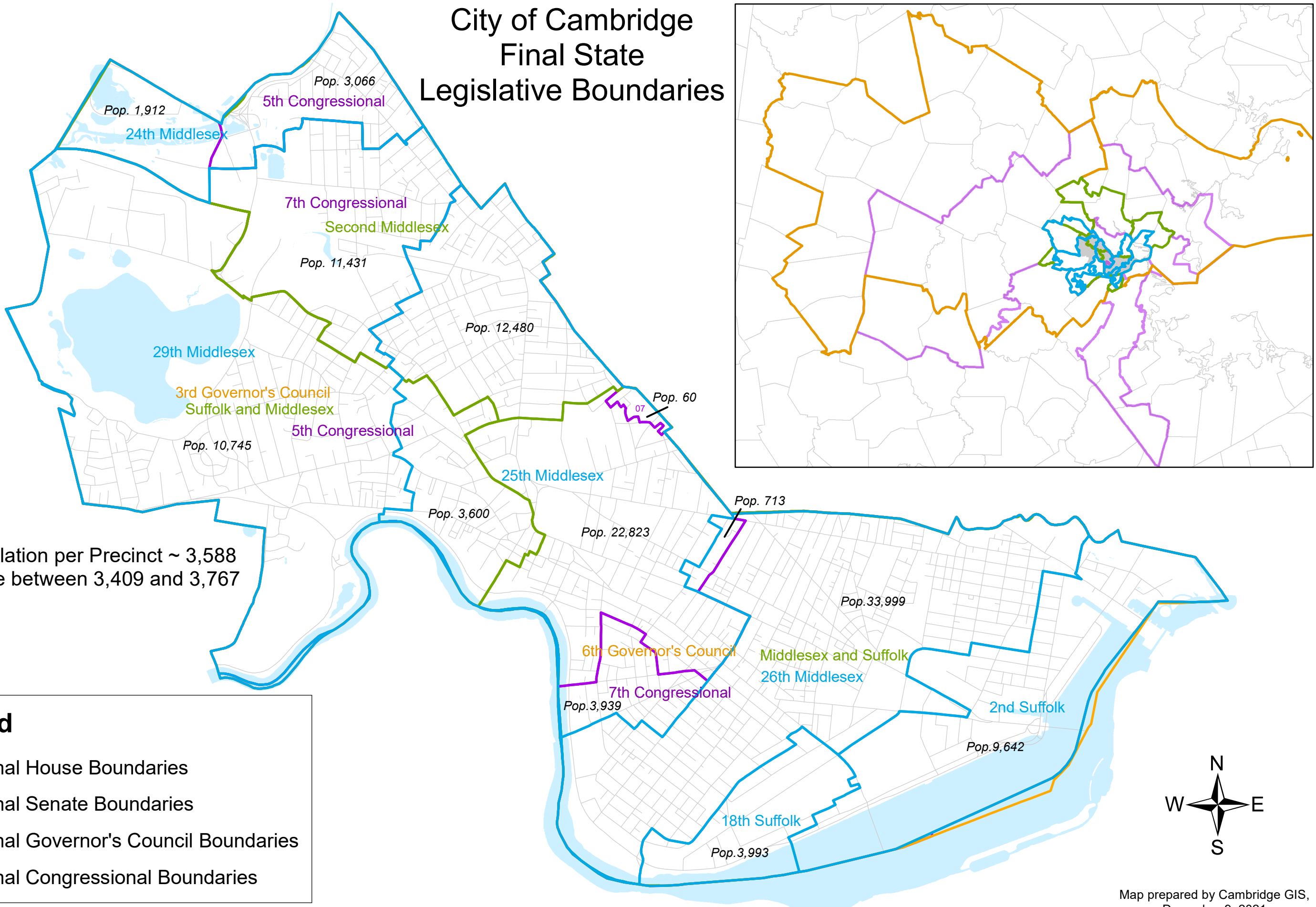
Proposed Congressional districts created an even more challenging map for Cambridge, as the boundaries cut through Cambridge multiple times but do not follow the House or Senate district boundaries. When boundaries for House, Senate, and Congressional districts are all drawn onto one map, Cambridge is divided into 13 sections, none of which can be divided evenly into precincts within 5% of the target precinct population. The attached map shows the population of each section.

Once the House, Senate, and Congressional districts were finalized, GIS created a new map with the goal of avoiding sub-precincts. The new map has nine sub-precincts, the minimum possible number. Unfortunately, many of the polling locations will no longer be in their historical precincts and there are some addresses that are split into multiple districts. Some of the precincts are less compact than the Commission prefers; for example, the shapes of 6-2 and 8-3 are necessary to keep Harvard dormitories from being split into different precincts while trying to stay within the Senate and Congressional boundaries.

The map submitted to the LEDRC was posted online on November 24 with a request for additional public comment. It was also presented to the City Council during a roundtable discussion on November 29. The Commission received additional public comment but was not able to shift any boundaries based on the feedback without creating additional sub-precincts. The final map also includes re-numbered precincts compared to the 2011 map; this was in response to public feedback and the response was very positive.

In closing, the final map submitted to the LEDRC represents the best possible division into wards and precincts given the limitations imposed by the House, Senate, and Congressional districts. The Commission created this map in a very public process with multiple public meetings and is confident that it meets the criteria required by state law. Therefore, the Commission urges the LEDRC to accept the Commission's map and approve our districts.

# City of Cambridge Final State Legislative Boundaries



Target Population per Precinct ~ 3,588  
Precincts are between 3,409 and 3,767

**Legend**

- Final House Boundaries
- Final Senate Boundaries
- Final Governor's Council Boundaries
- Final Congressional Boundaries

