

## REDISTRICTING TASK FORCE



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## **Community of Interest**

One of the criteria for the drawing of supervisorial districts in San Francisco is called “Communities of Interest.” This criterion is considered a “traditional redistricting principle” and it is found in the County Charter. This hand-out is designed to explain how to think about what a community of interest is, and how to document it so that it can be considered in the supervisorial redistricting.

### **WHAT IS A Community of Interest (COI)?**

A COI is a group of people in the same area that shares a common bond or interest. The definition is broad, leaving communities a lot of discretion in determining which issues are important to them and bring them together.

Communities of interest are best established through oral or written testimony from individuals or groups with first-hand knowledge of them. Census and other outside data can lend additional support, but should not replace first-hand knowledge of the community. COI testimony should address at least the first two of the following three points: the community’s interests and its geographic location, and if possible also the third point: why it should be kept together in a district.

It is up to those most familiar with a community, those who live in or work with it, to identify the interests that unite it. These interests could include social, economic, environmental and/or many other factors. Neighborhoods often think of themselves as communities of interest.

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### How Does One Establish or Document One's COI?

COI testimony should address at least the first two of these three key areas:

#### 1. Explain the nature of the bond or common interest that informs the community:

Your oral or written testimony should describe the interests that the community shares. You should establish as clearly as possible what the common interests are and why or how they are important to the community. For example:

- Testimony about a common interest in a community center should include the name and location of the center and describe the community's involvement in it or why it is important, e.g., the community accesses a variety of educational and recreational opportunities for children, adults and senior citizens at the community center.
- Testimony about a shared culture or heritage should identify the heritage and indicate why it is a common bond, e.g., common history, language, culture, etc.

#### 2. Explain the geographical location of the community of interest:

Testimony must establish the geographic location of the COI so line drawers know where it is. This includes at least a description of the COI's exterior boundaries, such as streets, bodies of water, railroad tracks, or shopping centers, that delineate the outside border of the community.

A map showing the location of the COI, along with oral or written testimony identifying the location can be extremely helpful to allow both community members and the Redistricting Task Force to locate the COI. A map can be created using free online programs such as google maps.

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3. Explain why the COI should be kept together in a district:

In addition, testimony might explain why the COI should be kept together in a district to allow for its fair representation. This includes why the COI's interests would be best represented together and why splitting the COI would be problematic. For example:

- Testimony about an economic interest, such as advocacy to improve economic opportunities, might note that redevelopment and job creation activities are most effective when residents in the respective area can work together with one, rather than multiple representatives.
- Splitting the COI might frustrate efforts to obtain government support by making the COI too small to gain the representative's attention to the issues at hand.