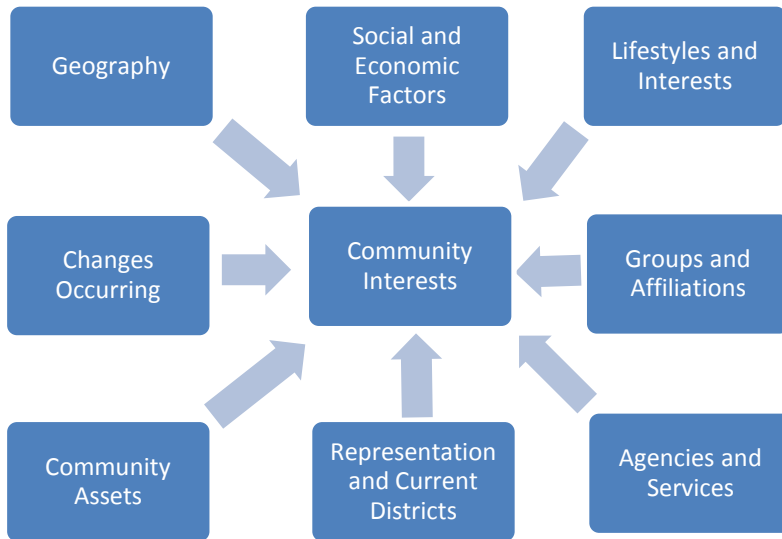


Identifying Communities of Interest



Directions

When you prepare testimony for the Citizen's Redistricting Commission on your community of interest, remember, you are making an *argument* for why your community should be kept together and not split into multiple districts, and why it should be grouped with other communities with similar interests. The goal is to make sure your community is in a district that will lead to the best representation possible and will be responsive to the **most important** overall interests which you've identified.

Geography and Current Districts

The first step in developing testimony is defining the geography of your community.

- Name your community (is it a neighborhood, a city, a region with several cities, a county?)
- How would you describe this community to someone who's never been there?
- How would you broadly describe the landscape? Coastal/Inland, Urban/Suburban/Rural
 - In what City, County, Region of the State? Near or in what major population centers
- Geography – are there physical features that divide the community geographically, eg. A major highway people don't typically cross; rivers, lakes, etc.
- You should be able to draw your community on a map. Try to be as exact as possible in drawing boundaries. You should feel free to draw on a paper map, however there are many resources for drawing maps on a computer.
- Do your current district representatives reflect the interests of your community?
- In what ways does your community participate in elections? Who votes and who doesn't? Are there significant barriers to participation and what are they?
- What people and institutions are politically influential in your community (community leaders, key organizations, media outlets, etc.)?

Social and Economic Factors

- Demographic breakdown (age, language, education, etc); how it compares to that of neighboring communities
- Education/ learning
 - How is district governed? District responsive to community?
 - Significant language barriers to education? Other access issues?
 - Number of elementary schools? Private?
 - Secondary schools? Post-secondary? Vocational?
 - Are students bused?
 - Continuing education/ learning opportunities
 - Access to technology; Internet
 - Access to libraries
- Employment
 - Largest employers; major industries
 - Small businesses/ home-based
 - Service industries
 - Opportunities for new graduates/ young people
- Economic wellbeing
 - Downtown vitality
 - Development
- Community identity and awareness
 - Media – newspapers (weekly; daily); radio; television; other
 - Public gathering places

Lifestyles and Interests

- What groups and affiliations exist? (faith-based, civic organizations, business associations, service clubs, ethnic clubs) Which one are you involved in?
- What do people do to socialize/ meet other people?
- Are there opportunities for cultural expression, arts? For crossing cultural boundaries?
- Are there annual/ special events that draw crowds?
- Do public gathering places attract families? Seniors? Teens?
- What are the typical traffic patterns of residents?
- Where do they go for groceries? Clothes? Books? Home repair? Dental/medical? Financial services?
- Is it a commuter community?
- Do people work from home?
- What do people do for recreation? Public/ private recreational facilities, parks? Sports teams with a high profile?
- Does your community experience large fluctuations in population during different seasons?
- Are there other special interests widely shared in the community?
- Are there smaller communities within the community?
- What do residents appear to value?

Changes Occurring

- Is the population increasing? Decreasing?
 - Are certain ages or segments of the population increasing or decreasing?
 - Is the community becoming more multicultural?
 - Are certain people moving away?
- Are there residential developments being planned?
 - What kind of housing? Who is the target population?
 - Are services (roads, sewers, etc.) being planned to accommodate new developments?
- Are there new employment opportunities? New businesses?
- Where is the nearest large anchor store, mall, shopping area?
- What is the rate of vacancy in the downtown core?
- Are area schools stable with sufficient enrolment? New schools being built?
- Are there new organizations? Agencies? Services?
- Are the health/social needs of the population changing? Are these new needs being met?
- Is the crime rate increasing? Decreasing?
- Are there community initiatives to deter crime and/or promote community pride?
- New parks, recreation facilities, other amenities?
- New festivals or events? Performing groups?
- Is there public transportation? Other transportation issues?

Community Assets

- What are the natural assets in your community? (the environment and water; rivers, lakes, wooded areas, other topographical features)
- What are the built assets? (buildings, parks, paths, public space; infrastructure)
- What are the social assets? (the social aspect of living in the community; skills and strengths of individuals and local associations/organizations)
- What are the economic assets? (local economy, jobs; tourism, attractions, businesses)
- What are the service assets? (health, education, agencies, facilities, day care, youth services, non-profit organizations)
- What successful events have taken place? What were the components contributing to success?
- Community-wide initiatives
- Stories that illustrate the community at its best
- Who are key players in the community? Why?
- Are there skills that are dominant locally?
- Examples of citizens making something happen
- Important achievements of local government, city council, county supervisors, school boards
- Problems turned into opportunities