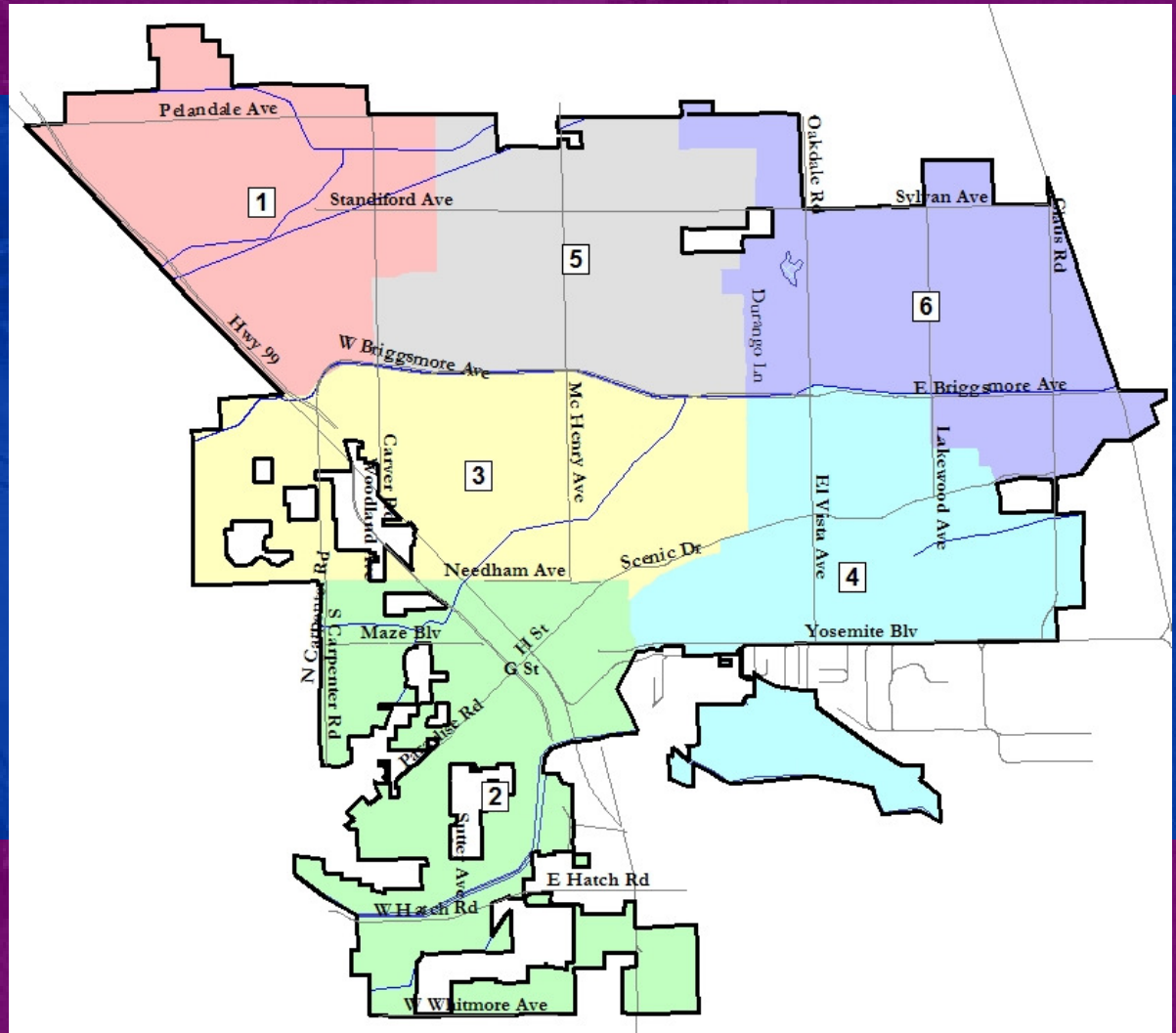


# Process Review

## Modesto's First Citizen's Districting Commission

Presentation by  
Douglas Johnson, President  
National Demographics  
Corporation



# Timeline

- May and June, 2008: Initial Commission Meetings and Public Hearings
- July 15: Official Draft Plan adopted
- September: 2<sup>nd</sup> Round of Public Hearings
- October 21: Commission's District Plan adopted
- Districts will be used in 2009 and 2011 elections, then redrawn using 2010 Census data.

# An Independent Process

- Charter Requirement: “district boundaries should be drawn **without regard for** advantage or disadvantage to **incumbents or challengers . . . [or]** for any political party.”
- Once the Commission was created, Councilmembers and political party representatives played no role in the Commission’s deliberations.
- Commissioners repeatedly stressed their independence and publicly stated their disinterest in any ideas or proposals that presented advantages or disadvantages for any councilmember or candidate.

# A Public Process

- The Commission heavily emphasized public involvement.
- Public Participation Kits enabled the public to draw their own plans.
- [www.DrawModesto.org](http://www.DrawModesto.org) featured maps, presentation, and the Commission schedule, along with Public Participation Kits for download and demographic profile maps of the City for reference.

# Extensive Public Outreach

- Notices and information sent to all local media outlets (Modesto Bee, Spanish-language papers, TV, radio, etc.).
  - Extensive News, Editorial, Hive, and After Deadline coverage in the Bee, with some coverage in other outlets.
- Commission members attended numerous meetings of other community groups to discuss the process and encourage participation.
  - Some Charter Review Committee members also reached out to various community organizations to encourage awareness and participation.
- Flyers sent out in English and Spanish announcing meetings.

# Hearings Held Across the City

- Hearings held at City Hall, American Legion, YMCA, Hanshaw Middle School, and Maddox Youth Center.
- Every meeting included formal and informal public input. Commissioners and the public engaged in dialogue and thoughtful exchanges, not just speeches.
- Spanish translators present at Hanshaw hearing.
  - Thanks to California League of Cities for providing simultaneous translation equipment.

# Outstanding Public Participation

- A large, diverse, thoughtful, and dedicated cross-section of Modesto residents closely followed and participated in the process.
- There were over 3,600 visits to the DrawModesto.org website and nearly 9,000 pages viewed.
- Active discussion on TheHive.modbee.com.
- Over 30 district plans submitted by the public using the Public Participation Kits or generated by public request.
- Scores of people attended Commission meetings, and a particularly dedicated group attended nearly every meeting.
- Process featured in-depth debates and insightful discussions about the character, interactions, and future of Modesto's many communities.

# Community Decisions

- South and West Modesto are clearly distinct communities, but do they fit best together or separately grouped with other Modesto communities?
- Should the Airport area be grouped with South Modesto? With South and West? Or with La Loma? Should the Airport and La Loma be with the Southeast, or with the College area?
- Near-unanimous agreement on consideration of elementary and high school attendance zones as communities of interest.
- There also was wide agreement on Briggsmore as a dividing line, but should it be crossed in the East or West?
- Other factors used in defining community ties included neighborhood watch programs, income levels, new-growth versus more historical areas, the College, English fluency, the river, the dry creek, and other geographic features and major roads.

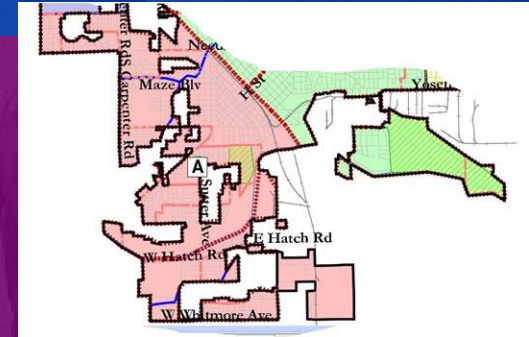
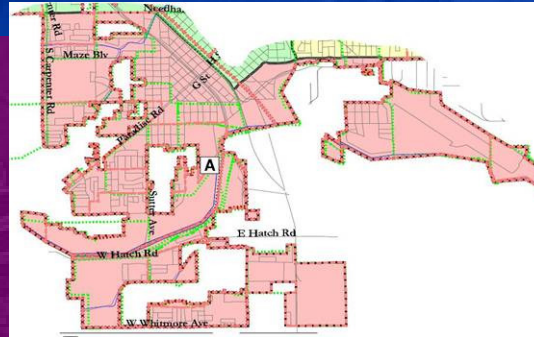
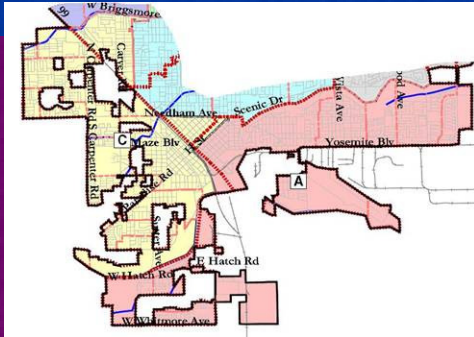
# Legal Rules for Plans

- Federal:
  - Equal population
  - Federal Voting Rights Act
- Charter:
  - Compact and contiguous
  - Follow visible natural and man-made features
  - Respect communities of interest
  - Drawn without regard for advantage or disadvantage to incumbents, challengers or political parties

# Plan Evolution

- Draft round considered 26 possible plans.
- Commission adopted Campos/Gutierrez and Swehla plans as official Draft plans (later renamed A and B).
- 2<sup>nd</sup> round saw more plans from the public, most prominently Plan E1 and the public suggestion that led to Plan C1.

# Federal Voting Rights Act Concerns



- Three approaches held varying degrees of risk.
  - To broadly generalize a very complicated law:
    - The Federal Voting Rights Act says that under certain circumstances a “protected class” group must be concentrated until it reaches a near-certain “ability to elect”; only then can it be divided, and then only to give the “protected class” a significant voice in a 2<sup>nd</sup> district.
- LCCR endorsement of the otherwise higher-risk West/South split approach gave a degree of safety to that approach. Their reversal made it the highest risk option.
- There was an even split among Modesto’s Latino community over which approach to take.
- More details in the October 8<sup>th</sup> Presentation ([www.DrawModesto.org](http://www.DrawModesto.org), under “Other Information”)

# Commission's Choice

- South/West decision was the subject of extensive debate, including discussions on this topic at every Commission hearing and meeting.
- As the process went on, new voices from the Modesto Community offered new perspectives.
- Commission ultimately chose the route that offered less legal risk, combining West and South in one district.
  - Commission also decided that the geographically separate Airport neighborhood fit better in a separate district.
- Plan C1 ultimately chosen as the Commission's Final Plan.

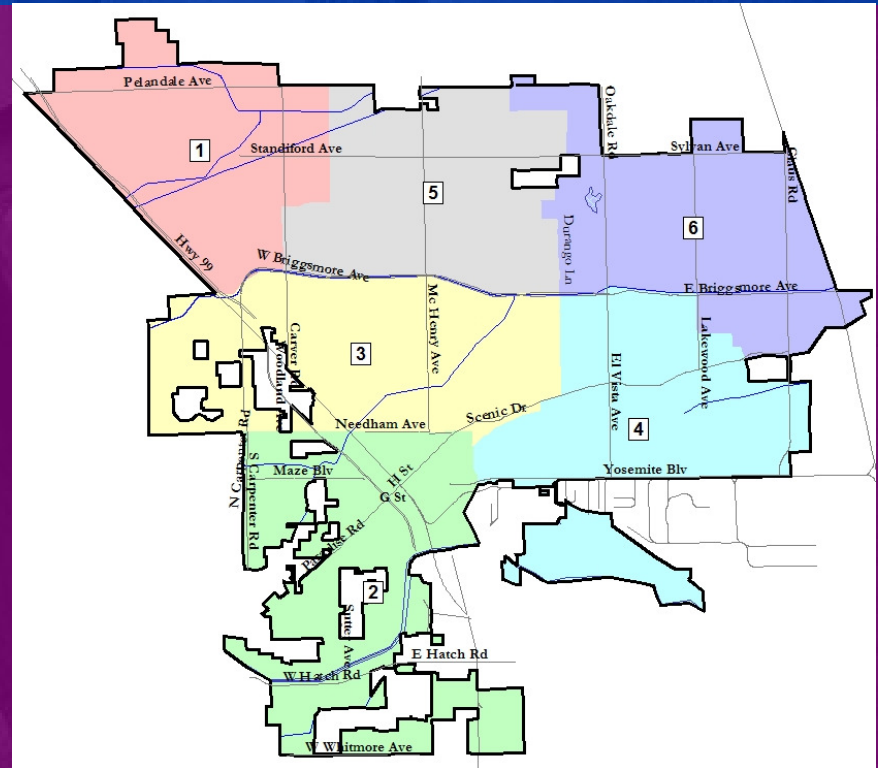
# Numbering the Districts

- Letters were used throughout the process to avoid any district-to-post comparisons.
  - Yet another element of the Commissions dedication to independence.
- Commission gave priority to having a 2009 election in the new Southwest district.
- See October 20<sup>th</sup> presentation (on [www.DrawModesto.org](http://www.DrawModesto.org)) for full details on the numbering options that were reviewed by the Commission.
- Commission randomly assigned district numbers to the remaining districts.
  - The public audience drew the numbers for the random selection.

# Adopted Plan (C1) Details

## Key elements:

- 2: South and West with Downtown.
  - Up to Kansas / Needham.
- 4: Airport with La Loma and SE Modesto.
  - Borders 3 along Durango and Dry Creek.
  - Borders 2 along Dry Creek.
- Briggsmore crossed in East.
  - Along Lakewood.
- Northern 1/5 border along Tully, Rumble, and Carver roads.
- Highly compact districts.



- 2009 Elections: Districts 2, 4 and 5
- 2011 Elections: Districts 1, 3 and 6

# Thanks

- Modesto should be proud of the attention, dedication, and effort shown by so many of its residents throughout this process.
- Thanks to the many who drew and submitted maps and district line suggestions.
- Thanks to everyone who participated and shared their thoughts with the Commission, especially to the many who attended and participated in nearly every meeting. The insightful and civilized public debate defined Modesto's many communities and contributed vital information toward the evolution of the plan.
- Thanks to City Attorney Susana Woods and her staff, especially Ms. Anne McGrew. Their long hours and hard work were vital to the success of this process. They did all of this work on top of their already-heavy existing workload.
- Most of all, thanks and congratulations to the members of Modesto's first-ever Citizen's Districting Commission. Future Commissions have to work hard to live up to this group's example. Personally, I hope every one of them apply for California's first-ever independent statewide redistricting commission in 2011!