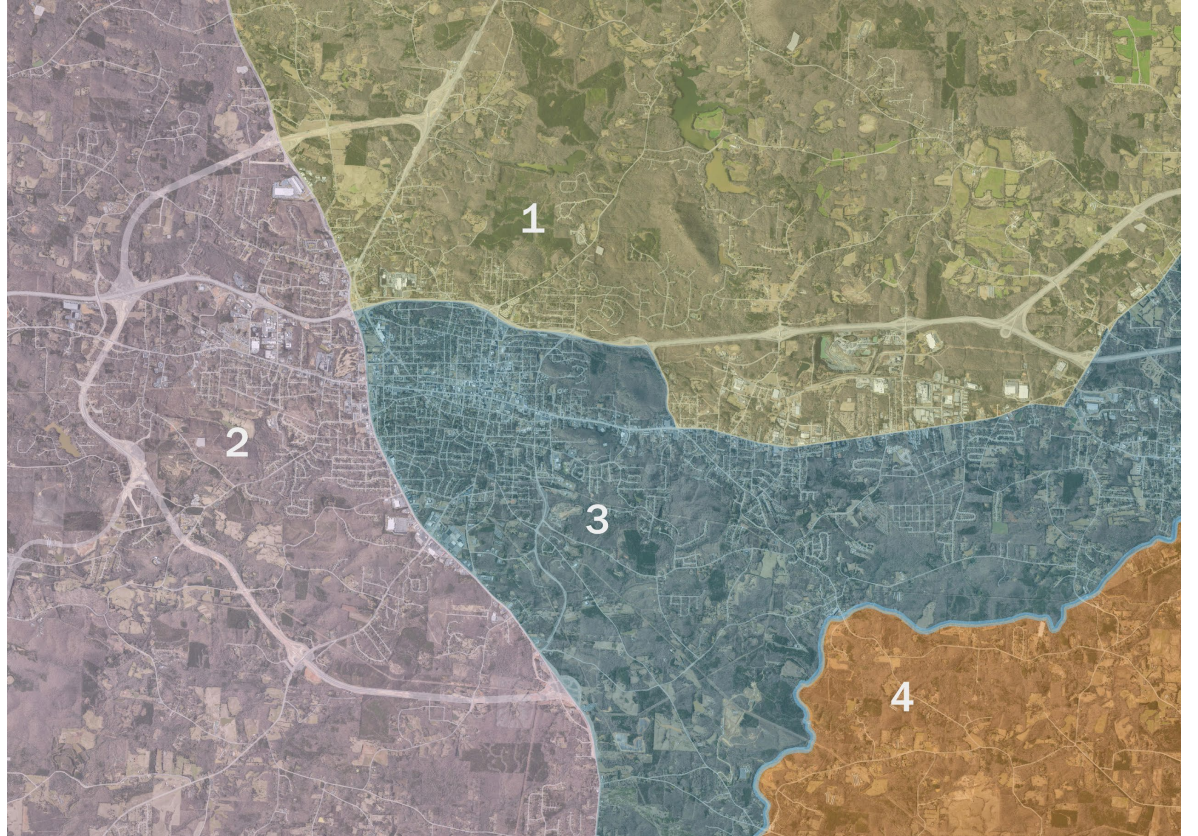


Currituck County Electoral Changes and Redistricting

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Introduction

Blake Esselstyn:

- Founded Mapfigure Consulting after more than 10 years working in local government
- Specialist in the geographic and demographic aspects of redistricting
- 18 plans drawn by Blake have been adopted by jurisdictions across NC

Caroline Mackie:

- Litigation and government attorney with Poyner Spruill; focus on election-related work
- Have worked with 15+ local governments on electoral changes, redistricting, and related election matters



Overview

- Changes to Electoral Structure
- Redistricting
- Referendum
- Timeline

Current Electoral Structure:

- 7 members**
 - 5 in residency districts**
 - 2 elected at-large**
 - Chair and Vice Chair elected by the Board**
 - Staggered 4-year terms**

NC General Statute 153A-58

A county may alter its structure by selecting one or a combination of the options provided in the statute.

- **Minimum of 3 commissioners; no maximum**
- **2-year, 4-year, or staggered 4-year terms**
 - **Caveat: can only have combination of 2- and 4-year terms IF there is an odd number of commissioners, the members are elected countywide (residency districts or at-large), and the chair is elected by the board**

A county may alter its structure by selecting one or a combination of the options provided in the statute. Modes of election:

- **At-large (Candidate can reside anywhere in county; elected countywide)**
- **Residency districts (Candidate must reside in the district; elected countywide)**
- **Electoral districts (Candidate must reside in and is elected by district)**
- **Blended districts (Candidate must reside in the district, is elected by district at the primary, and is elected countywide at the general election) (this is rare in NC)**

3 additional notes:

If a combination of at-large and electoral districts is chosen, no more than half of the seats can be elected at-large.

The Board can also select how the chair is selected: either from among the members for a one-year term or as a separate office voted on by the entire county.

Redistricting does not affect the unexpired term of any commissioner. Because current terms are staggered, any new resolution needs to state which seats up for election and when.

1. Determine preferred structure and redistricting plan
2. Public hearing on proposed plan
3. Pass a resolution that (a) describes the proposed change in structure and (b) calls for a special election in Currituck county
4. If the referendum passes, the changes are implemented at the next primary and general election
5. If the referendum fails, no changes are implemented, and the resolution becomes void



Electoral Districts and Redistricting

If electoral districts are selected, then the resolution will need to include the proposed districts.

Electoral districts are based on population. They must be “substantially equal” in population.

In NC, that means plus/minus 5% of the ideal district population.



One-person, one-vote

Currituck County Population Imbalance

“If a county is divided into electoral districts for the purpose of nominating or electing persons to the board of commissioners, the board of commissioners may find as a fact whether there is substantial inequality of population among the districts.” N.C. Gen. Stat. § 153A-22(a).

One-person, one-vote



QuickFacts

Currituck County, North Carolina

What's New & FAQs >

QuickFacts provides statistics for all states and counties. Also for cities and towns with a *population of 5,000 or more*.

Q Enter state, county, city, town, or zip code

-- Select a fact --



CLEAR



TABLE



MAP



CHART



MORE

Table

All Topics



Currituck County,
North Carolina

Population estimates, July 1, 2024, (V2024)

32,278



PEOPLE

Population

Population estimates, July 1, 2024, (V2024)

32,278

Population estimates base, April 1, 2020, (V2024)

28,102

Population, percent change - April 1, 2020 (estimates base) to July 1, 2024, (V2024)

14.9%

Population, Census, April 1, 2020

28,100

Population, Census, April 1, 2010

23,547



One-person, one-vote

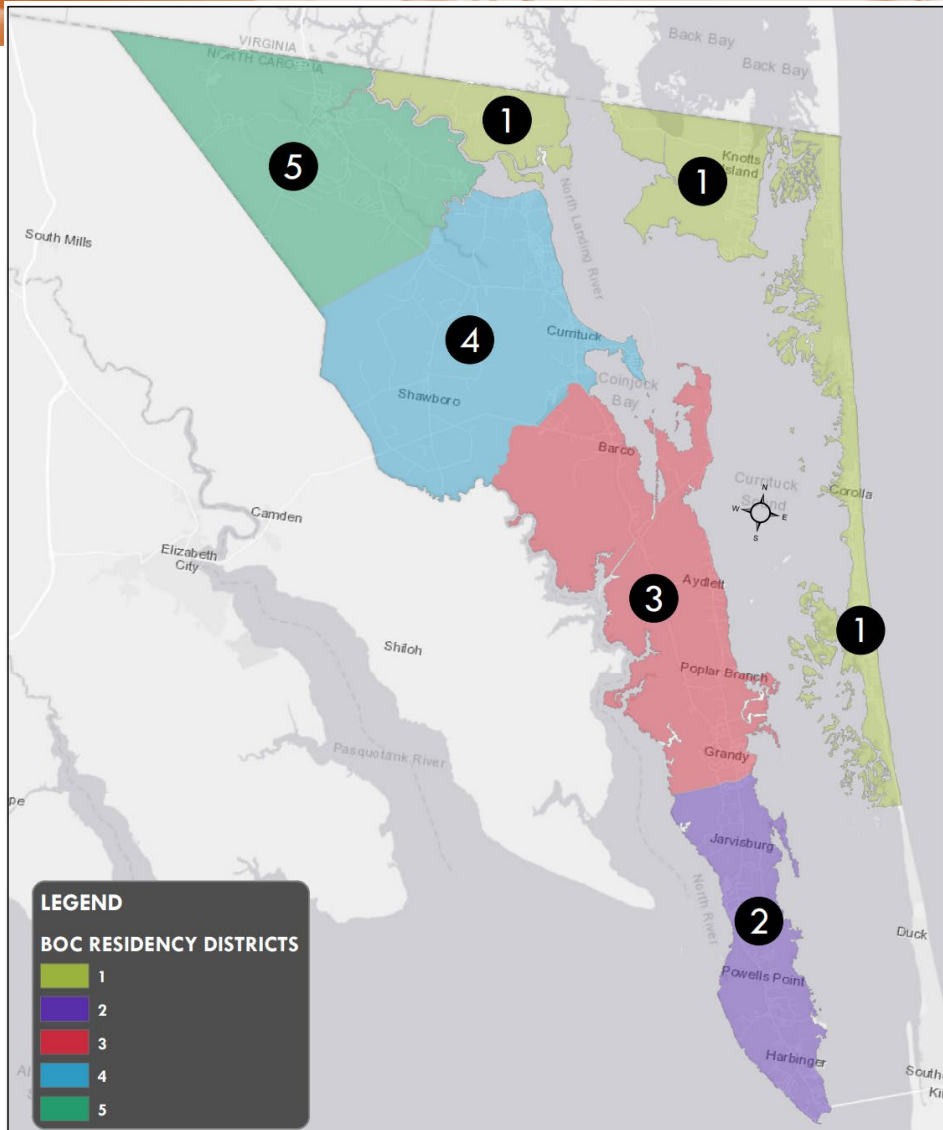
$28,100 \div 5 = 5,620$ (ideal)

5% of 5,620 = 281

+5% = 5,901 (upper bound)

-5% = 5,339 (lower bound)

Current Districts

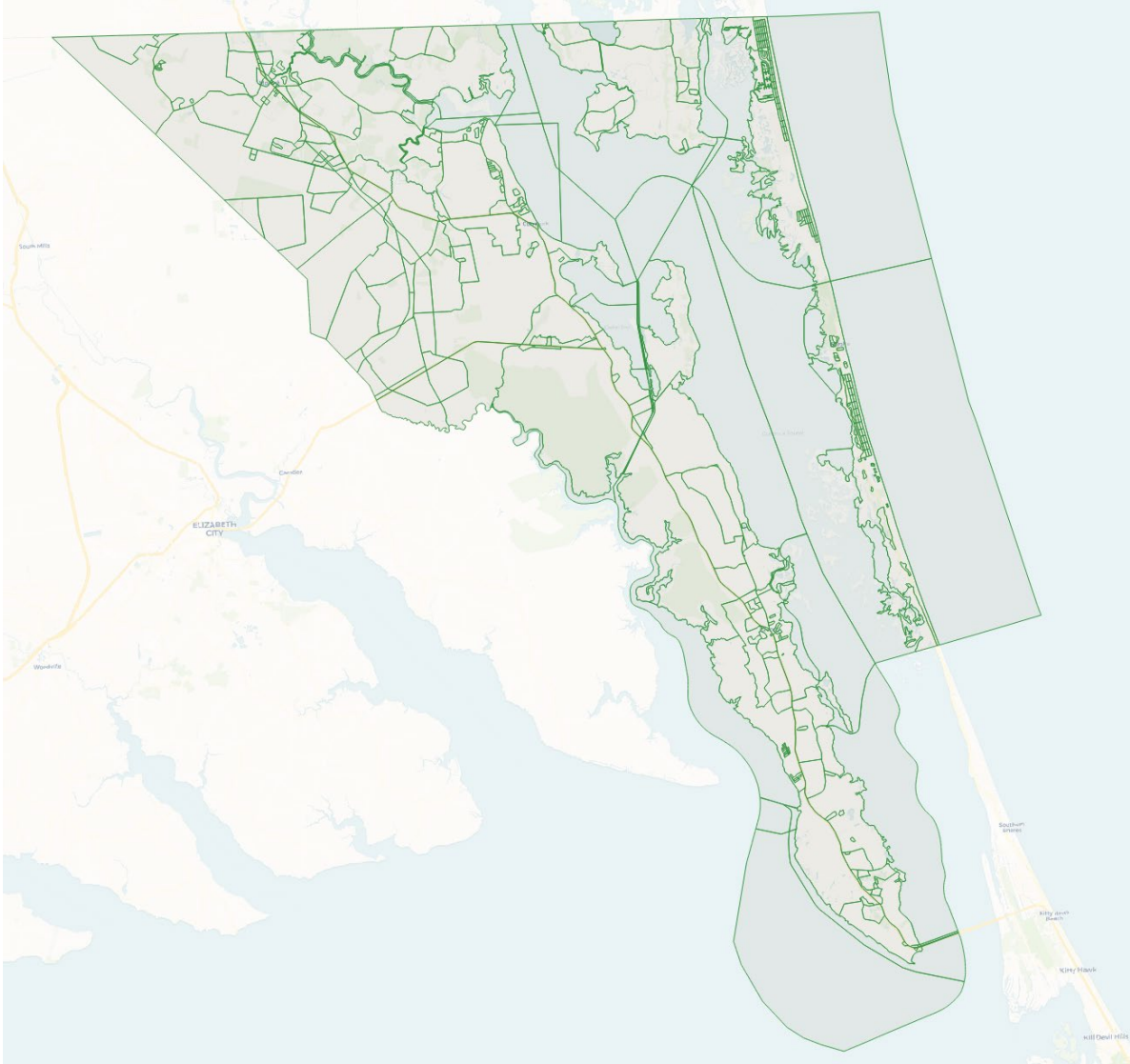


- Boundary between 1 and 5 appears to follow Northwest River, also a precinct boundary (between East Moyock and Gibbs Woods precincts)
- Boundary between 4 and 5 appears to follow precinct boundaries (East Moyock and West Moyock in 5 and Indian Ridge and Courthouse in 4)
- Boundary between 3 and 4 appears to *mostly* follow Coinjock precinct's northwest boundary, plus airport in 4.
- Boundary between 2 and 3 splits the Poplar Branch precinct.





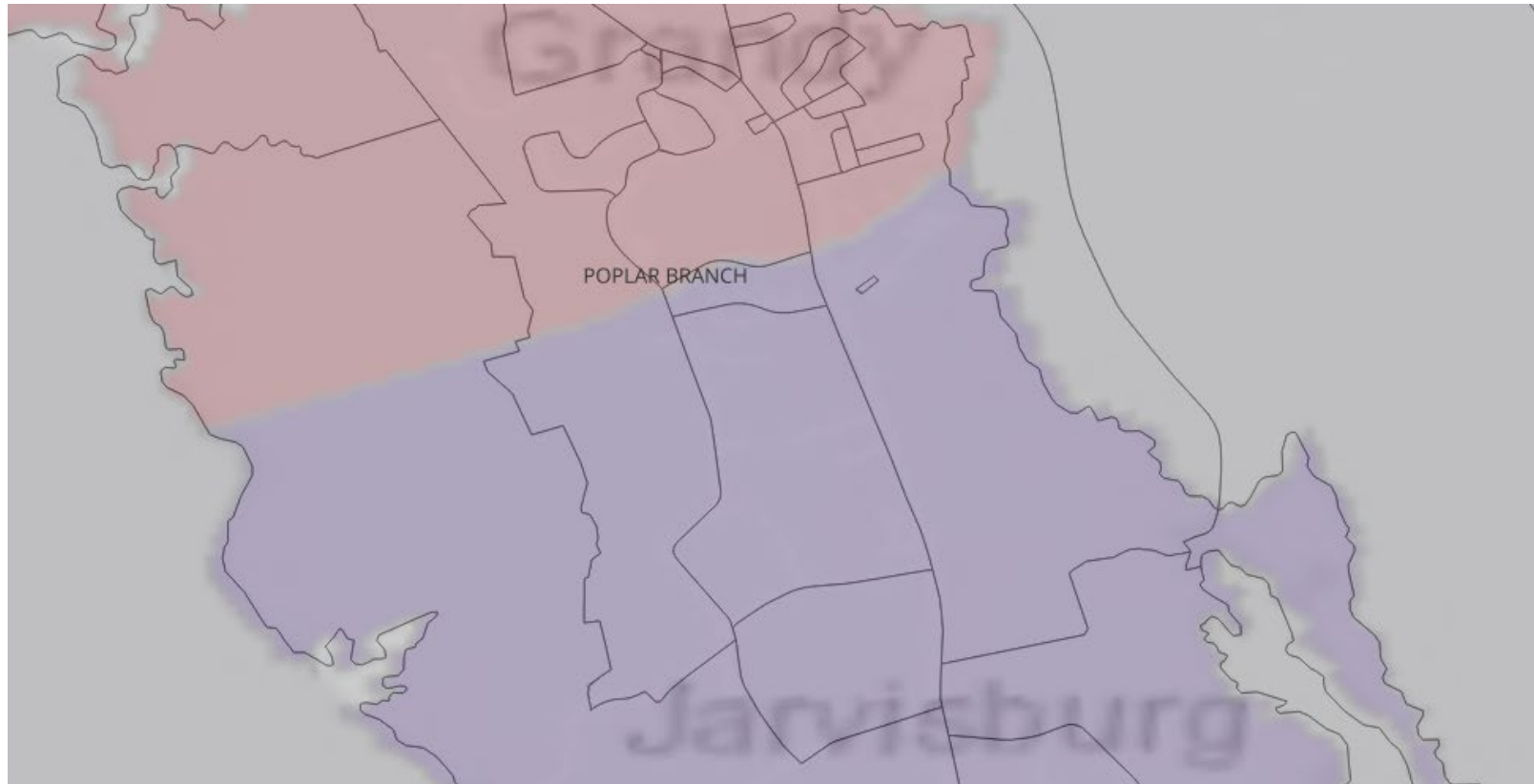
Census Blocks



- This map shows all the census blocks in Currituck County (depicted with green outlines).
- These are the building blocks for drawing electoral districts, the smallest unit that can be used.
- There are 523 of them.
- Some blocks span more than 10 miles.
- Some consist of only water.
- About 31% of the blocks include no population.

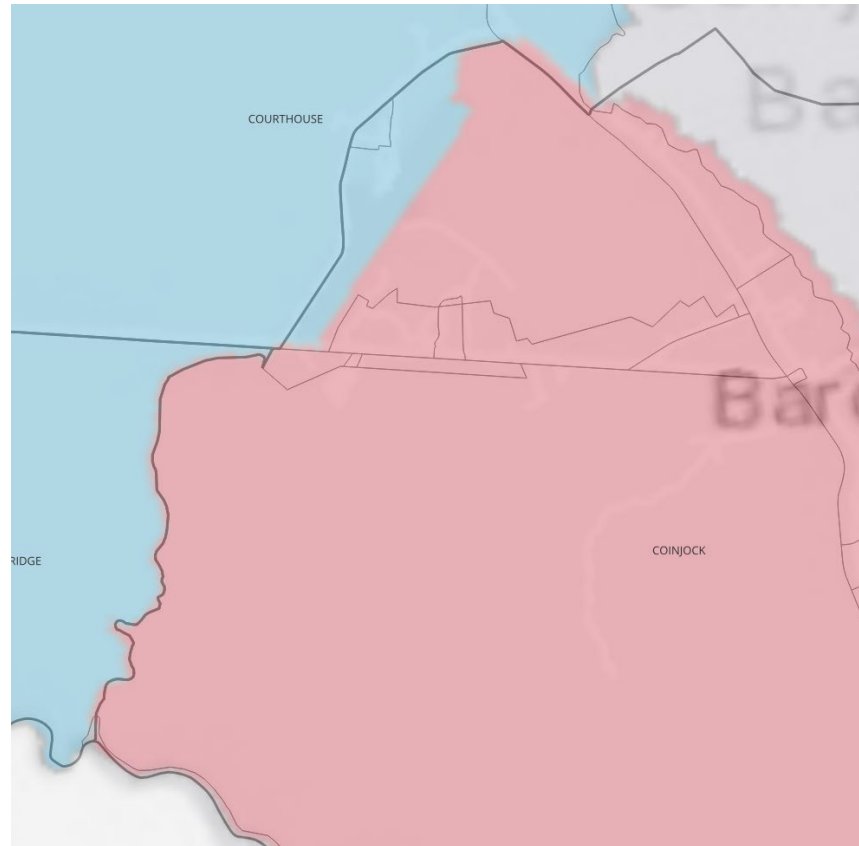
Census Blocks

- The boundary between Districts 2 and 3 doesn't follow census block boundaries so those districts' population can't be precisely calculated.

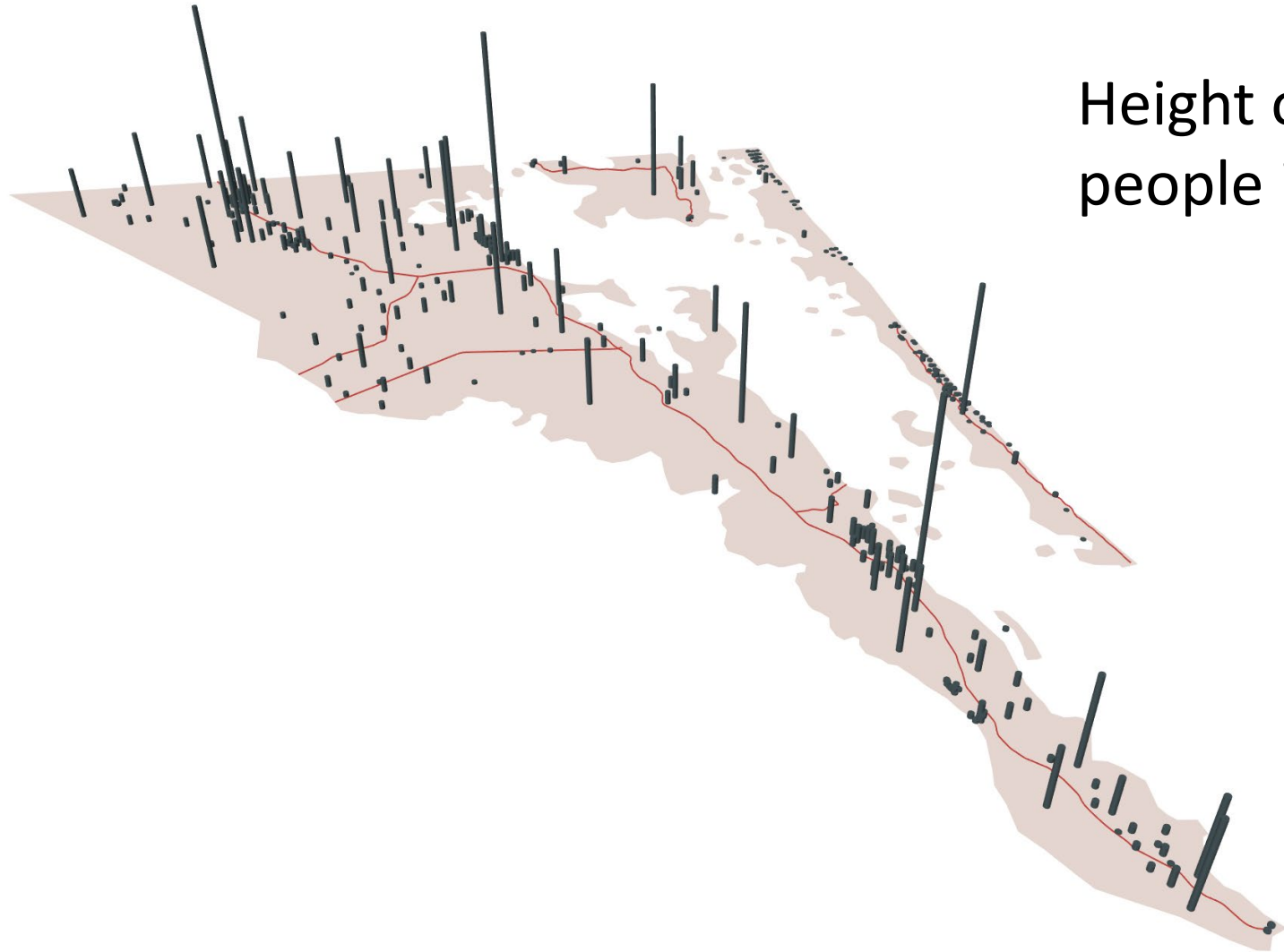


Census Blocks

- The boundary between districts 3 and 4 also doesn't follow census block boundaries, so those districts' population can't be precisely calculated.

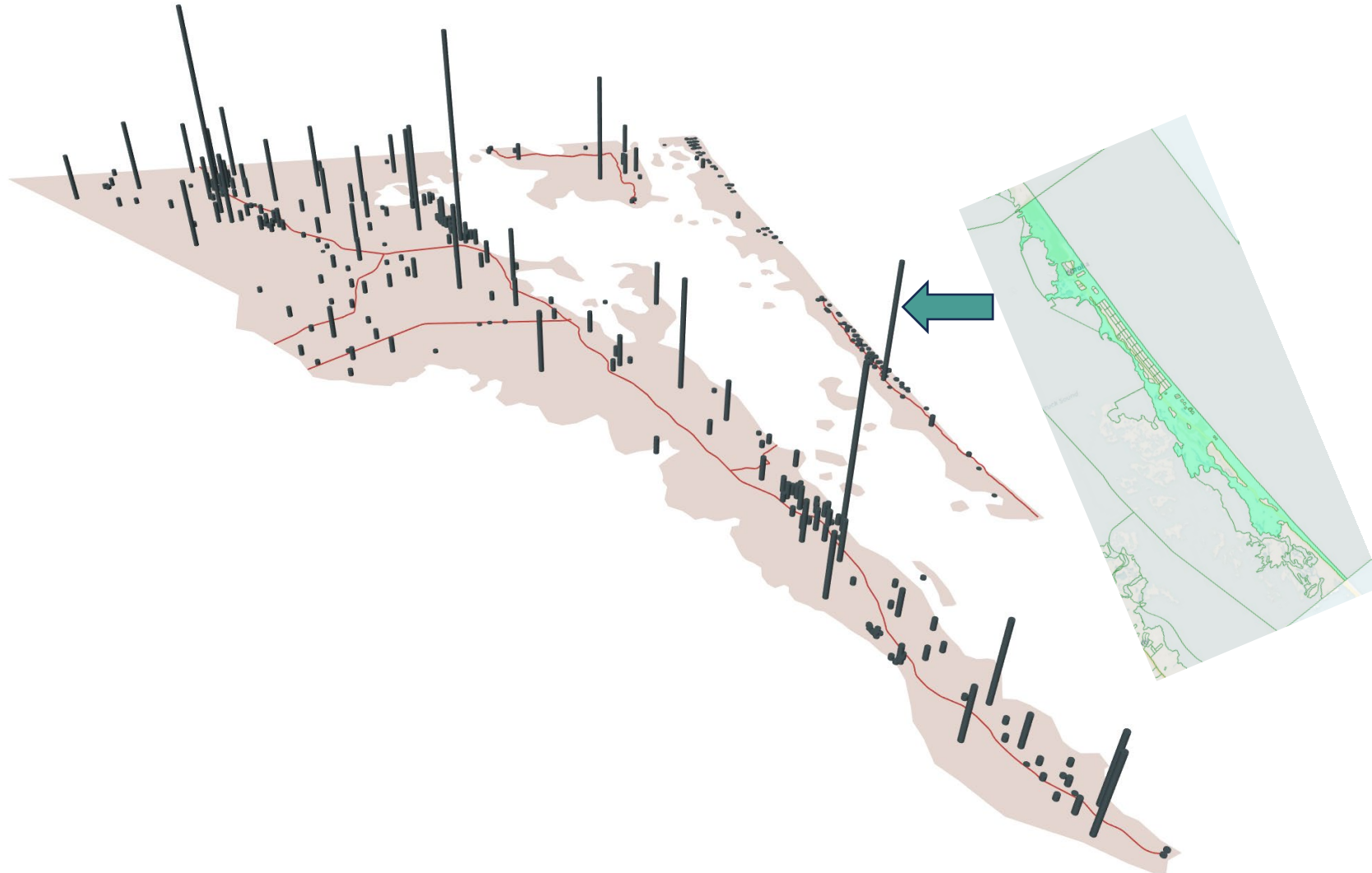


Block Populations



Height of spire is indicative of number of people in that block

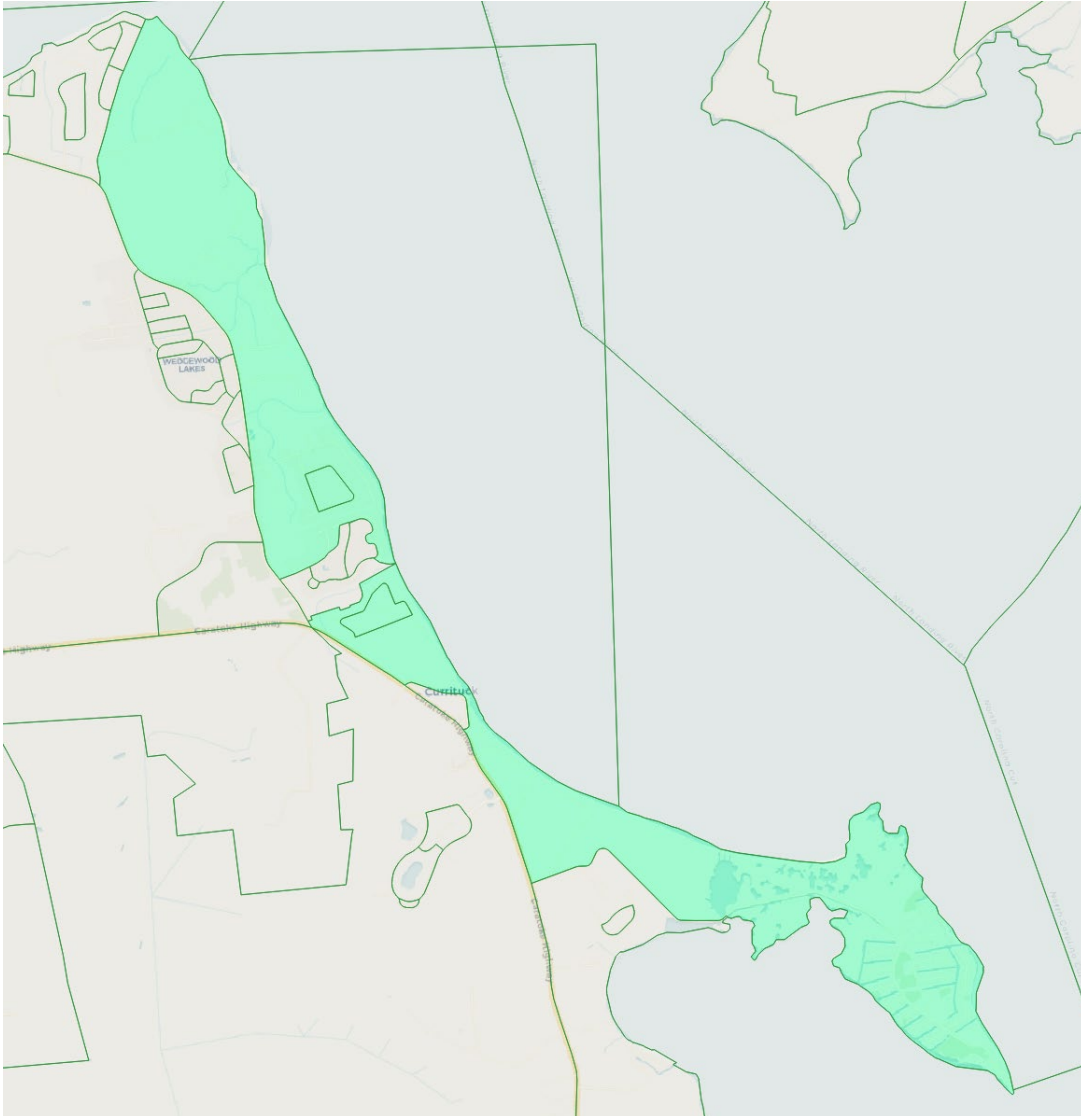
Block Populations



The spire indicated by the arrow shows the population (707 persons) of a 13-mile-long census block, shown in green on the inset map, which extends from north of Corolla to the County Boundary.



Census Block Example



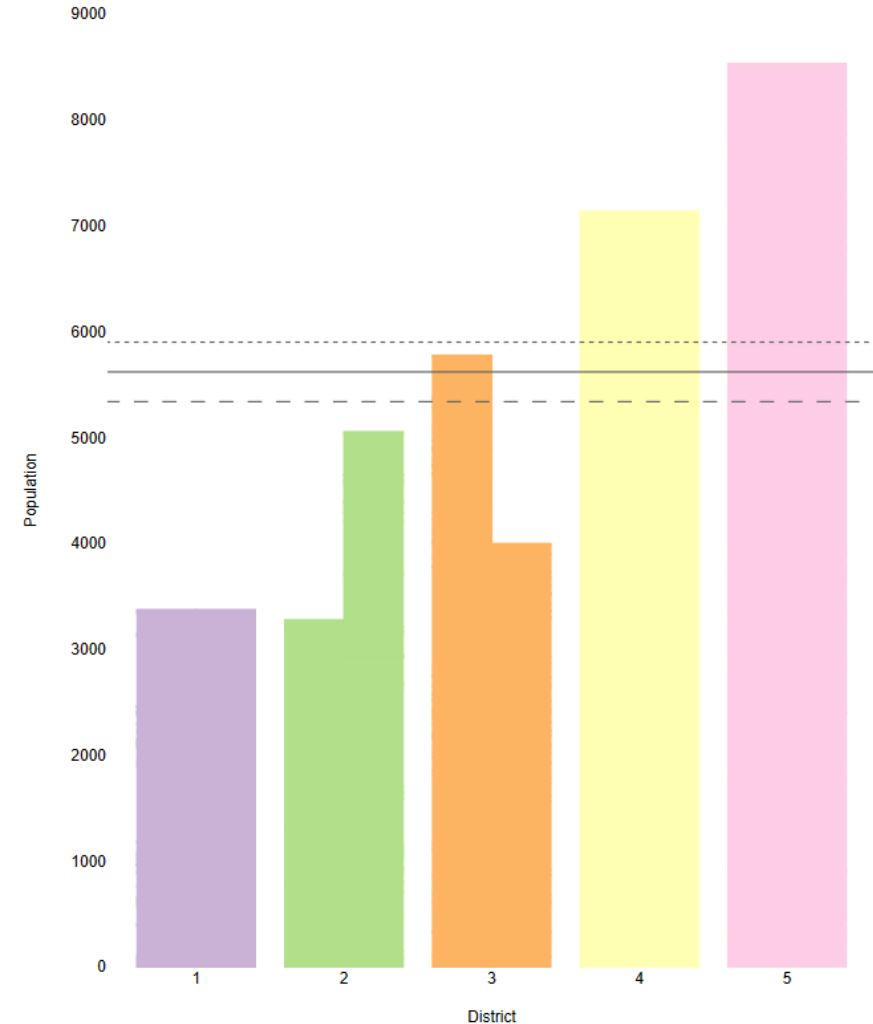
- The Historic Currituck County Courthouse is in a block (shown in green at left) that measures over seven miles from northern tip to southern tip.
- This block also contains two “donut hole” blocks.
- The combined population of the three blocks is 1,422—more than a quarter of the ideal population for one district in a five-district plan.

Census Block Example



- The census blocks, published in 2020, do not reflect blocks (or roads) created by new development in the last five years.
- The image at left is centered on the Fost Tract project in Moyock and the Moyock Middle School campus.
- Note that the newly created blocks in the photo do not have corresponding census block outlines (shown in yellow).

Current District Population



- Chart showing estimated populations for current residency districts based on visual inspection of map from website.
- Solid line is ideal district population; dashed and dotted lines are -5% and +5% respectively
- Again, we can't calculate populations for Districts 2 and 3 because of divided census blocks, so the two values shown are a theoretical maximum and minimum. The correct value is somewhere in between.



Guiding Principles/Criteria

- Instructions to demographer
- Required guiding principles
- Optional guiding principles
 - What is important to Currituck county and its residents?
 - What should we know about Currituck county?
- Contract: 3 alternative plans; additional price for more plans



Required Guiding Principles

1. To comply with one-person, one-vote constitutional principles, every district's total population should be within plus or minus 5% of the ideal district size.
2. Minority voting strength should not be diluted, but race should not unnecessarily predominate.
3. Contiguity. "[E]ach district shall be composed of territory within a continuous boundary. N.C. Gen. Stat. § 153A-22(c).
 - Note: connections using census blocks that are entirely water are considered consistent with contiguity. Further, "travel contiguity" is not a requirement.



Optional Guiding Principles

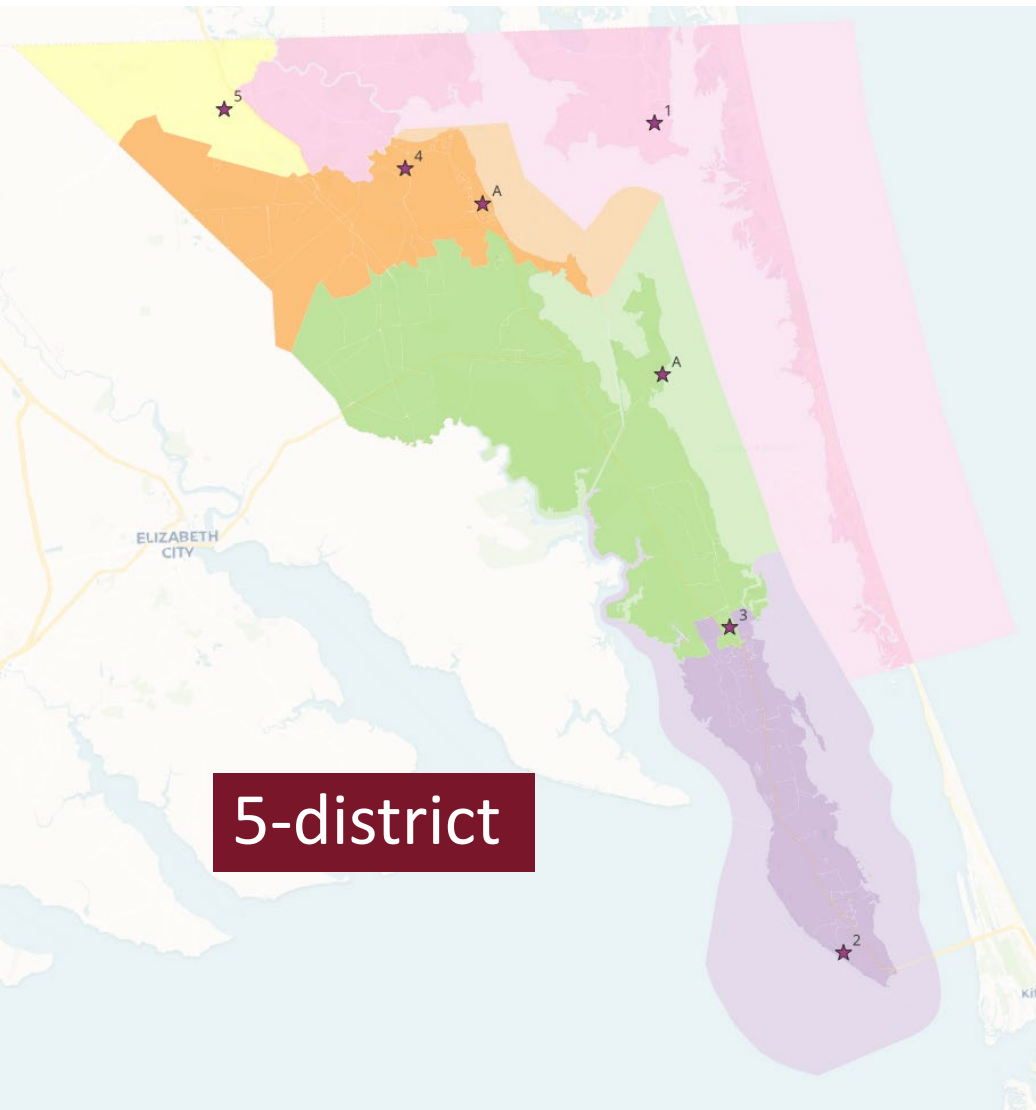
1. In order to minimize voter confusion, districts should retain their current configuration, to the extent possible (“core preservation”)
2. Alternatively, the existing district lines should not be considered except to the extent legally required (“blank slate”)
3. Avoid the pairing of incumbents in the same district
4. Follow natural boundaries and physical features, such as roads or waterways, to the extent possible



Optional Guiding Principles

5. Recognize and respect neighborhood boundaries
6. Recognize and respect communities of interest, to be defined by the Board with public input
7. Consider areas of potential future population growth/decline
8. Use precincts as building blocks for the districts, to the extent possible
9. Districts should be reasonably compact, to the extent possible

Sketch Plan Example



- The plan shown at left is a cursory sketch of one possible arrangement that a **five-district** plan with balanced populations could have.
- Stars show incumbent residences, labeled with their district number (or “A” for at-large).
- Please note that this sketch was created with a simplified approach, not informed by discretionary guiding principles.
- The following slide shows similar cursory sketches for four-, six-, and seven-district plans.



Sketch Plan Examples



4-district



6-district



7-district



Referendum

- Resolution initiates the change in structure by describing the change and calling for a special referendum. NCGS § 153A-60.
- Referendum must be held at an election when all precincts in the county are open and voting (i.e. March 2026 primary or November 2026 general election). Statute encourages election on “a date that will result in the highest possible voter turnout.”
NCGS § 163-287.



Recap: Action Items for Board

1. Select electoral structure
2. Decide criteria/guiding principles for redistricting
3. Public hearing
4. Select redistricting plan
5. Pass resolution that calls for a special election referendum on adoption of the new structure



Timeline

The timeline is up to the Board. For November 2026 election, we need to have resolution adopted by summer 2026.

Suggested/Example Timeline:

- August 4: in-person meeting to decide on structure, criteria
- October 6: presentation of proposed plans
- November 3: public hearing
- January 2026: vote on resolution



Important Note

The Board of Commissioners cannot advocate for the passage of the referendum. Individual commissioners, in their personal capacity, can.

N.C.G.S. § 153A-456: A county shall not use public funds to endorse or oppose a referendum, election, or a particular candidate for elective office.



Questions/Discussion