



City of Laguna Niguel
Transition from At-Large to By-District
Elections: Adopted Map
Final Report

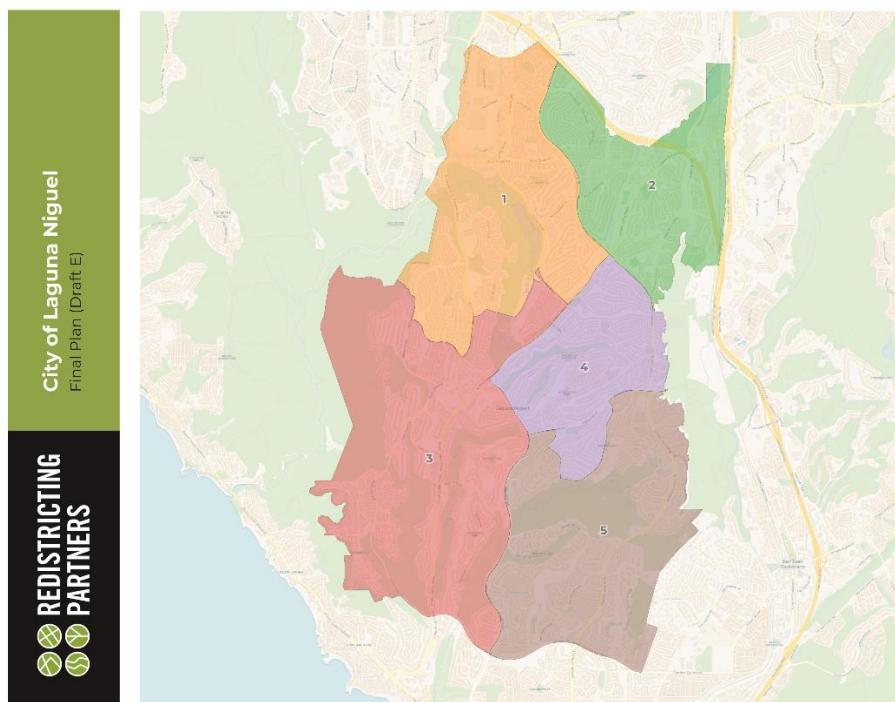
Executive Summary

The City of Laguna Niguel followed the FAIR MAPS Act and the California Voting Rights Act criteria to guide the city's transition from at-large to by-district elections. Following a five-meeting structure on January 16, 2024, the City Council officially adopted Draft Map E, which was initially submitted by an anonymous member of the public via Districtr, an online map-drawing tool the city made available for public use. It was particularly important to the City Council that they only considered publicly submitted maps for consideration to ensure transparency and public inclusion. The adopted map meets all criteria required by state and federal laws, with minimal splits of communities of interest.

This report documents the specific criteria used during the districting process and describes the decisions made when communities of interest (COIs) were split. While the City did its due diligence to best maintain as many COIs as possible, minor splits were necessary in order to follow the higher ranking criteria set forth by the FAIR MAPS Act. All deliberations and decisions were made by the City Council during public meetings; and, all public meetings and other relevant documents can be accessed here: <https://www.cityoflaguneniguel.org/1591/Transition-to-District-Elections>

Adopted Map: Draft E

Draft E originated from the public. It was submitted on October 21, 2023, via Districtr. The City Council elected to uplift the map, identified as ID 203079, due to it maintaining communities of interest, using logical boundaries to separate districts, and meeting all legal requirements. The City Council voted in favor of the map on December 5, 2023, and officially adopted the map on January 16, 2024.



FAIR MAPS Act Criteria

As required, the City of Laguna Niguel adopted a map that ensures the population is well balanced, uses the appropriate census dataset, follows the federal Voting Rights Act, and does not discriminate or favor a political party, incumbent or candidate. The total deviation for the adopted map is 5.7%, well below the 10% total deviation maximum allowed for municipalities. Additionally, the City and its demographers used the required Statewide Database's adjusted census data, which reallocated incarcerated residents throughout the state.

Using the FAIR MAPS Act criteria was emphasized since the first day of the districting process, and the demographers presented on these requirements at every public hearing. Furthermore, the demographers provided documentation to the City Council of which publicly drawn maps did and did not fulfill the FAIR MAPS Act criteria.

Below is the ranked list of criteria as required by the FAIR MAPS Act and how the Adopted Map met these criteria.

FAIR MAPS Act Ranked Criteria	Adopted Map (Draft E)
<i>To the extent practicable, council districts shall be geographically contiguous.</i>	All districts are whole and do not overlap with each other.
<i>To the extent practicable, the geographic integrity of any local neighborhood or local community of interest shall be respected in a manner that minimizes its division.</i>	The City of Laguna Niguel has well-established homeowners' associations, which residents are well aware of and use in lieu of neighborhoods. Out of 119 HOAs, only seven were split. See page 4-11 for descriptions of COIs and reasons for splits.
<i>Council district boundaries should be easily identifiable and understandable by residents. To the extent practicable, council districts shall be bounded by natural and artificial barriers, by streets, or by the boundaries of the city.</i>	There were three main thoroughfares used as logical dividers: Niguel Road, Crown Valley Parkway, and Moulton Parkway. When main roads were not used as boundaries, it was due to maintaining COIs or balancing population.
<i>To the maximum extent practicable, and where it does not conflict with the preceding criteria in this subdivision, election districts shall be drawn to encourage geographical compactness in a manner that nearby areas of population are not bypassed in favor of more distant populations.</i>	The City created compact districts and avoided constructions that would bypass nearby population in favor of more distant population. All districts are more circular/square in appearance and any less compact portions are due to higher ranked criteria, like following the census geography in achieving sufficiently equal population.

Splits: Communities of Interest

When discussing COIs, HOAs were natural neighborhood lines for well-established communities that were easy to understand for the public and had pre-designated lines (see annex for the City's official map of all HOAs.)

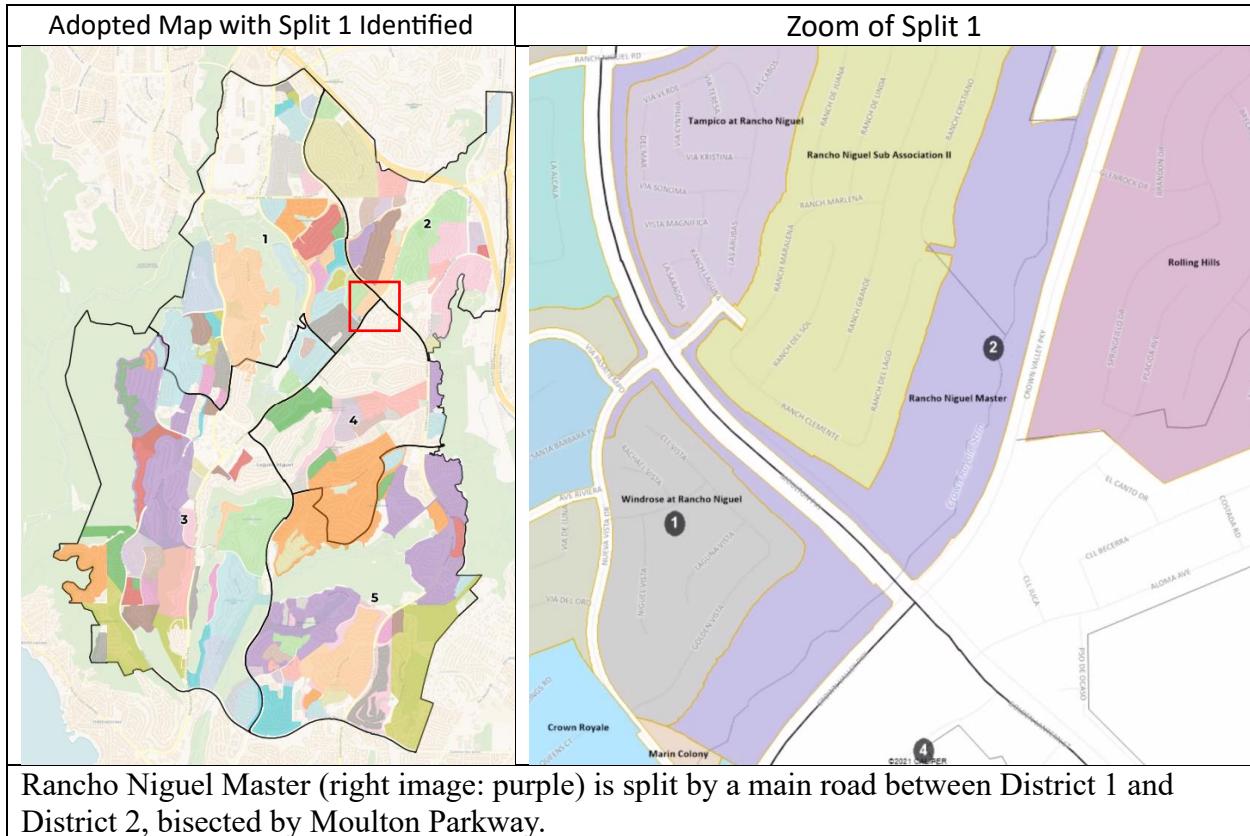
Below is the map highlighting all seven HOA splits in the final plan.



Split 1: Rancho Niguel Master

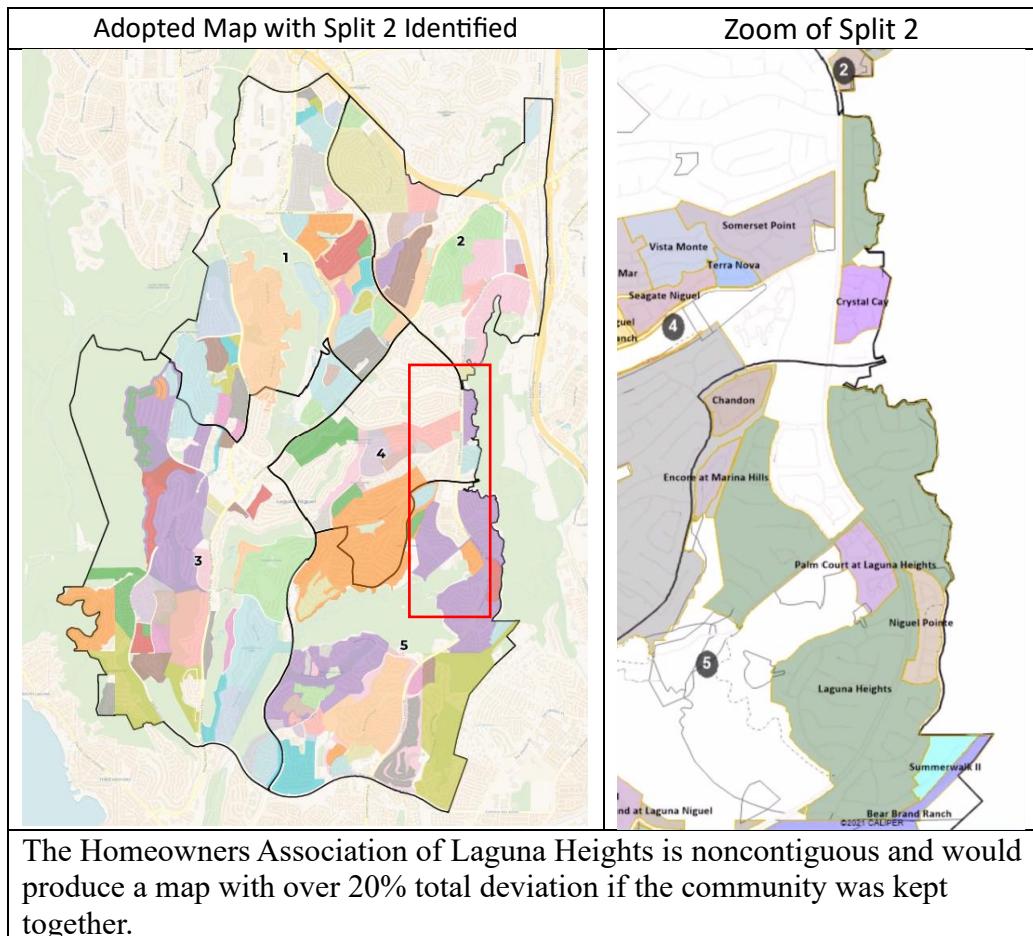
This split was due to the HOA crossing a main thoroughfare, Moulton Parkway. In order to maintain this COI, the map would have split two other HOAs and would have unnecessarily created jagged boundaries between District 1 and District 2.

When assessing the total population, 59.4% of Rancho Niguel Master residents live in District 1, and 40.7% live in District 2.



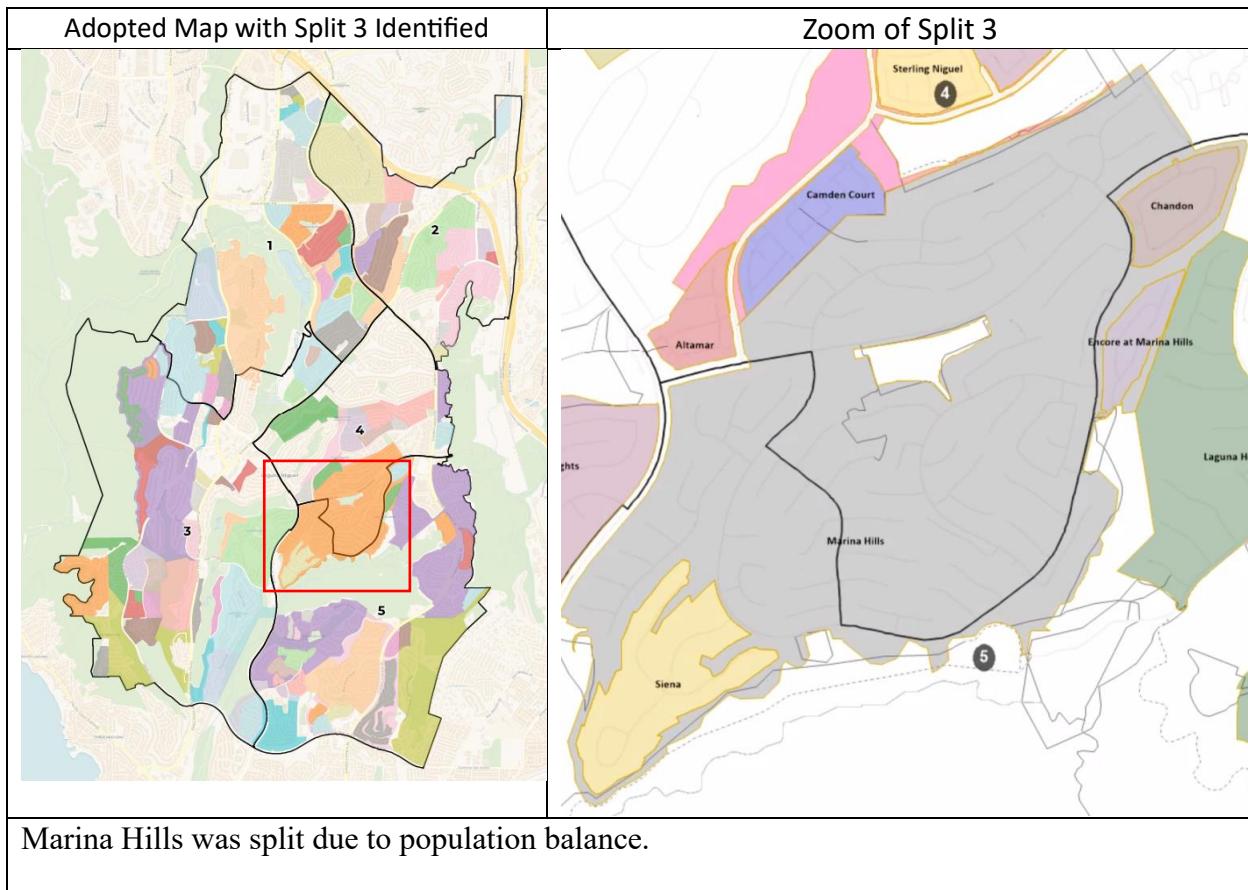
Split 2: Laguna Heights

The way Laguna Heights is composed is already noncontiguous (see images below). Due to the shape of the homeowner's association, about 9.5% of its residents live in District 4, and over 90% live in District 5. If the City attempted to include all of the community association together, the total deviation would be over 20% - far above the 10% maximum.



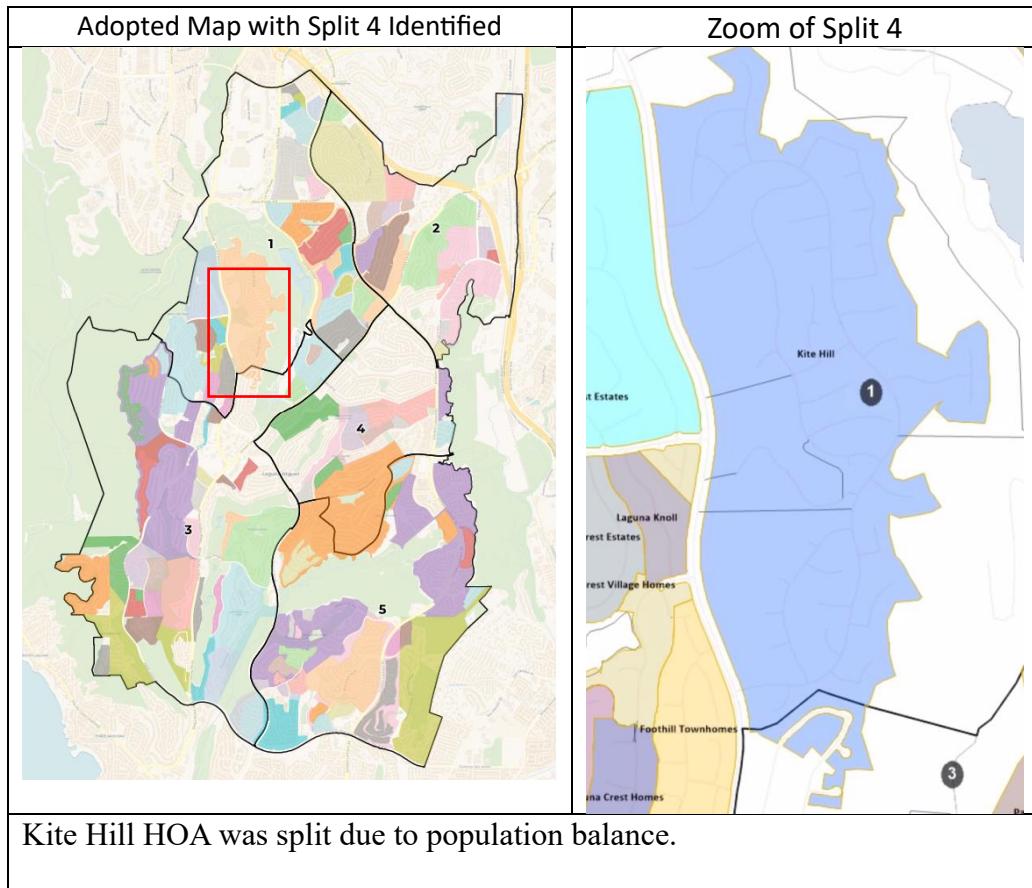
Split 3: Marina Hills

Marina Hills HOA was split due to population balance. This community association is split between districts 4 and 5, with 29% of its residents in District 5 and 71% in District 4. Attempting to put the entire community association in either district would result in a map with a total deviation of over the 10% maximum.



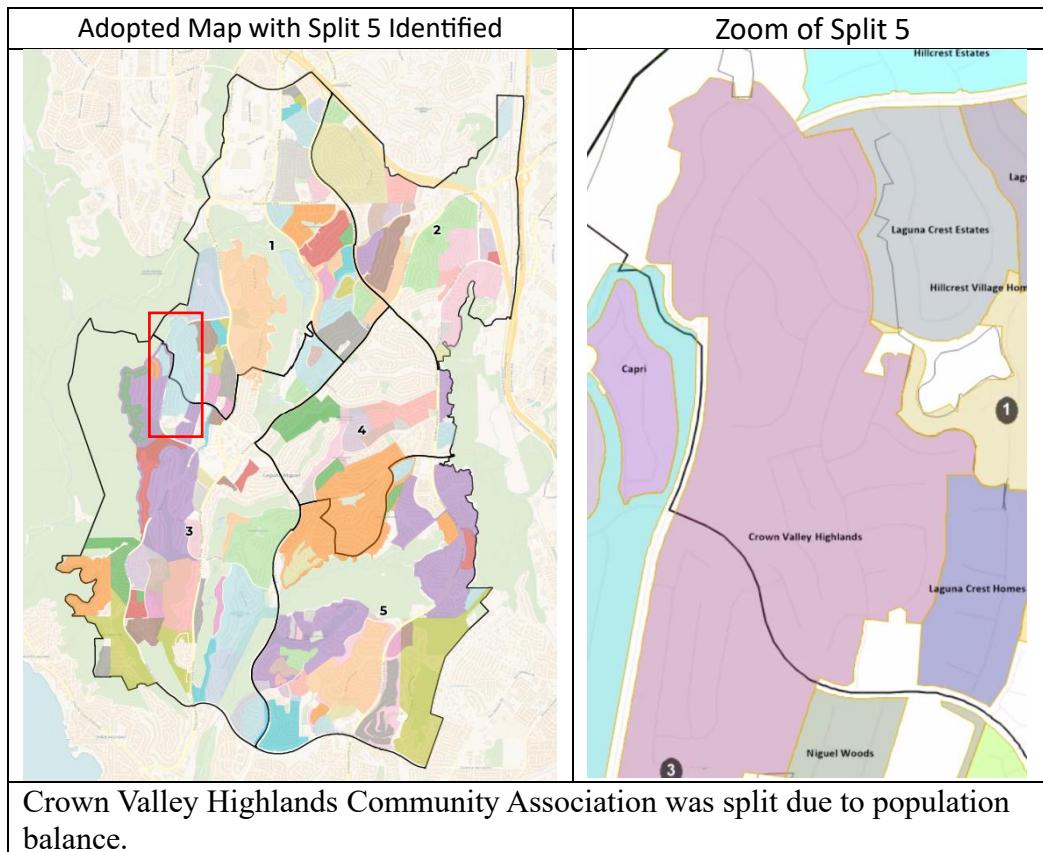
Split 4: Kite Hill

The Kite Hill HOA was split due to population balance, and if the City attempted to keep Kite Hill whole, it would have created a noncontiguous map. Additionally, this split is minimal, with 95.6% of residents living in District 1 and 4.2% living in District 3.



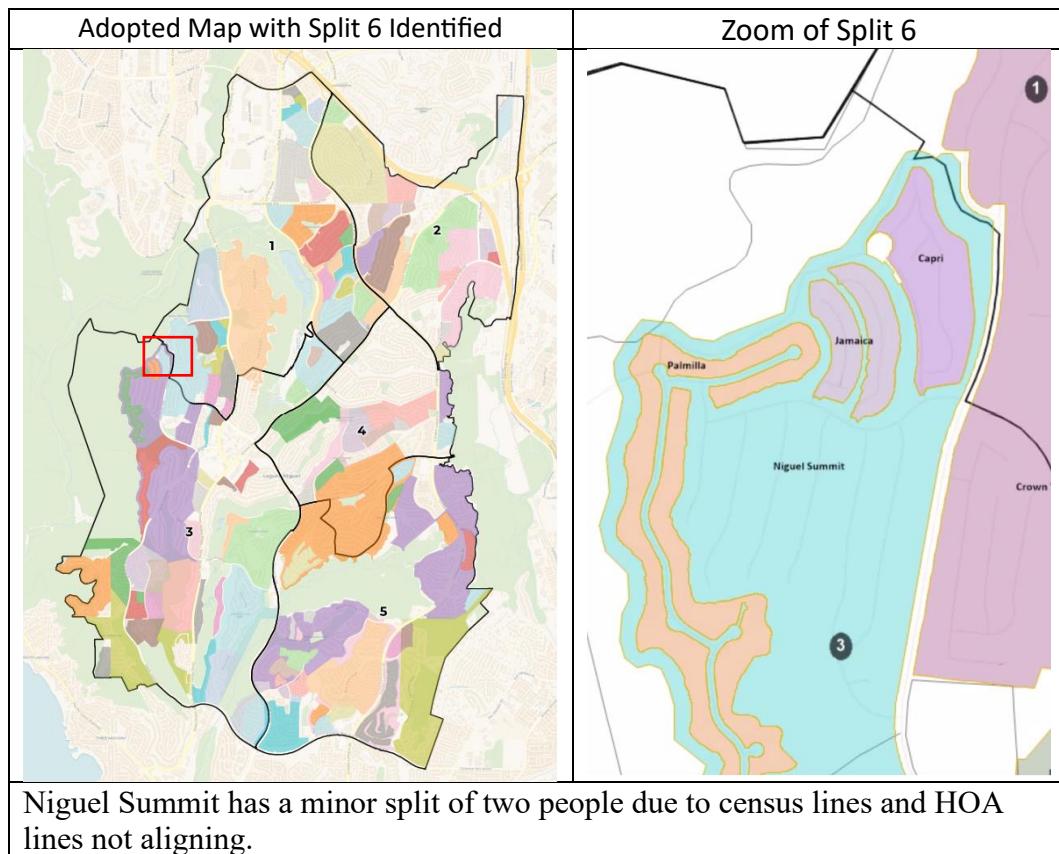
Split 5: Crown Valley Highlands

Crown Valley Highlands was split due to population balance, and if we attempted to keep Crown Valley Highlands whole, it would split two other homeowner's associations. This ensures the least number of HOAs were split. As a result of the divide, 76.4% of residents live in District 1 and 23.7% live in District 3.



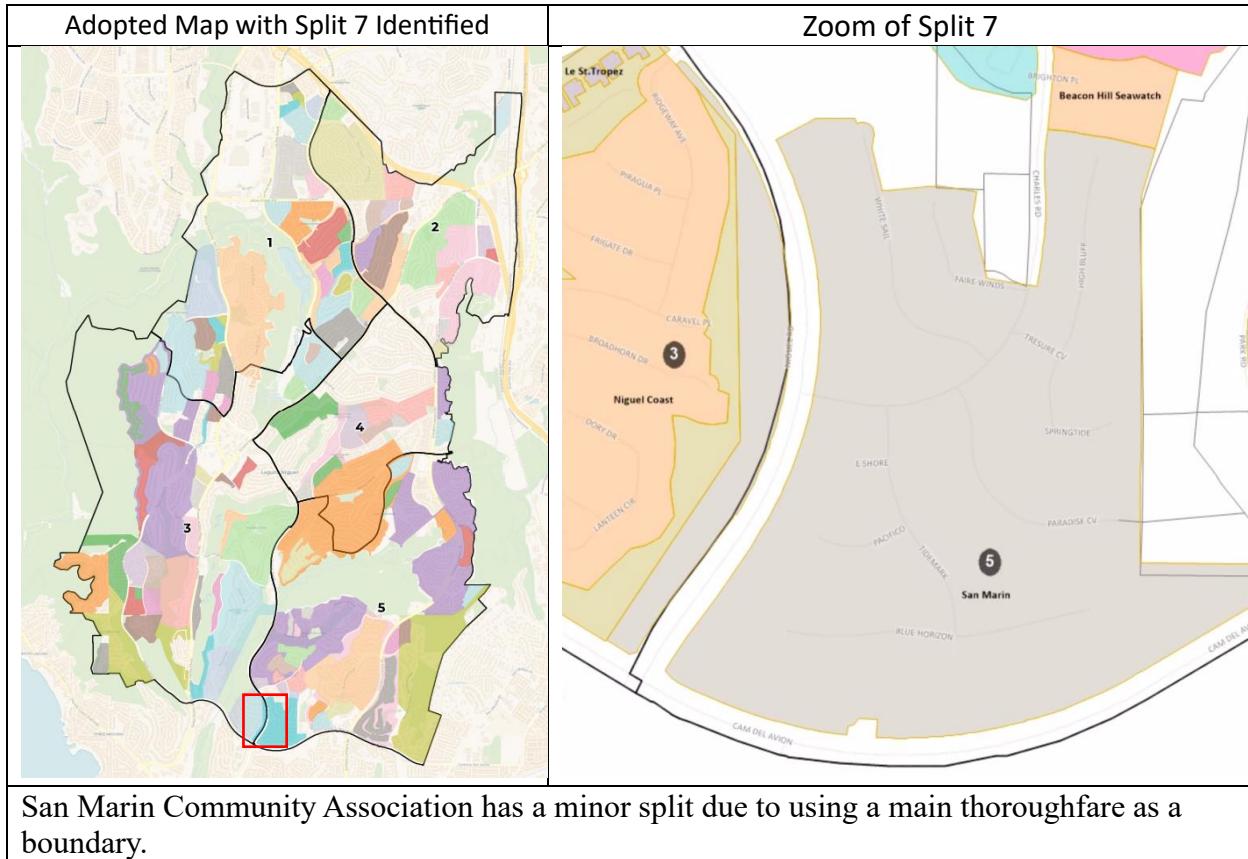
Split 6: Niguel Summit

Niguel Summit has a very small split due to census lines and HOA lines not aligning. According to the census, only two Niguel Summit residents live in District 1, while the remainder live in District 3.



Split 7: San Marin

San Marin has a minor split of 92.4% of residents in District 5 and 7.6% in District 3. This is due to the adopted map following a main road, Niguel Road, while the HOA slightly overlaps across the street. If the City attempted to keep the HOA whole, it would substantially divide another HOA and would create jagged boundaries.



Additional community of interest split: School Boundaries

A city resident requested that school boundaries be used as dividers for the City's districting. However, this map, titled Public Plan 1, only had 4 districts.

Additionally, the City of Laguna Niguel has both public, private, and charter schools located within its borders. The public schools located in the City are located in what is known as the Capistrano Unified School District (CUSD). The CUSD has its own 7 adopted "Trustee Election Areas" with Laguna Niguel public schools falling into two different areas, Trustee Election Areas 4 and 6. Further, Laguna Niguel students that attend the two local CUSD high schools must travel outside of Laguna Niguel city limits to neighboring cities located in Trustee Election Areas 1 and 5. Finally, all private and charter schools located in Laguna Niguel accept students from throughout the County of Orange.