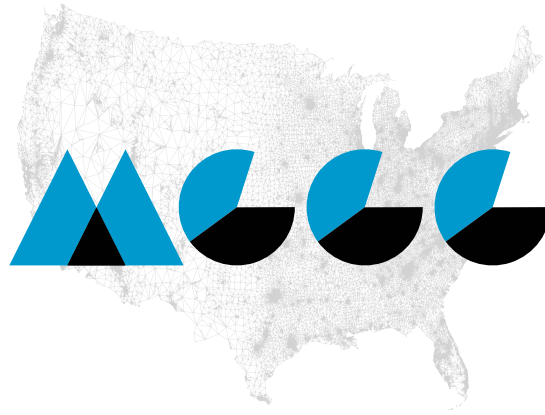


MICRC Public Feedback Overview through July 18, 2021



MGGG Redistricting Lab

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Introduction

This report was prepared by members of the MGGG Redistricting Lab at Tisch College of Tufts University to summarize submissions regarding Michigan redistricting to the [MICRC Public Comment Portal](#).

	WRITTEN	theory	COI	DISTRICTS	CD	SD	HD	COI MAP
Week 1	23	15	4	12	9	1	2	6
Week 2	70	34	24	30	20	5	5	6
Week 3	36	18	17	15	12	2	1	2
Week 4	63	22	38	21	12	4	5	8
Week 5	35	19	13	8	8	0	0	5
Week 6	40	13	18	28	19	4	5	15
Week 7	78	40	47	30	18	5	7	14
Week 8	69	44	33	39	16	10	13	11
Week 9	182	89	100	63	10	27	26	18
Week 10	16	9	5	13	9	3	1	3
Week 11	36	9	22	16	6	6	4	5
TOTAL	648			277	139	67	69	93

Table 1. Summary of Submissions

Notes on the summary table

- We've tried to classify the written testimony into two main kinds: *theory of gerrymandering*, such as what kinds of principles would make for fair or unfair redistricting; and *COI descriptions*, which are usually narrating the locations and characters of communities and how they should be handled, but without an accompanying map. Note that these two types don't add up to the whole, because some submissions defy this classification, or fall under both categories.
- Districting plans, however, do add up as either Congressional districts (CD), Senate districts (SD), or House districts (HD).
- For each kind of submission we've recorded the total number of comments for the week as of now. Note that these numbers may change in the future when people go into the portal and add new comments to older submissions.
- The number of submissions by week may be slightly different than what is reported in the portal [search tool](#) because of time zone discrepancies.

Overall themes and comments

1. Every week, there has been more written testimony than map-based testimony. Many written testimony submissions describe COIs, and we recommend reaching out to the submitters to encourage them to attend mapping trainings.
2. There is a lively mix of support and criticism of the COI-based approach to redistricting.
3. Themes we see included every week include district shape, partisanship, COIs, county/city boundaries, and the urban/rural divide.



1 Week 1: May 1–7

44 submissions: 23 Written, 12 Districting, 6 COI Map, 3 File/Link

Major themes this week included COIs and process. With 11 out of 24 written submissions on the topic, the biggest single topic this week was the request/demand that MICRC require commenters to disclose identifying information, including name and physical address, to verify that input is submitted by Michigan residents.

Other themes included district shape, concerns about partisanship and representation, and competitiveness.

One commenter asked if the new districts will be established by the 2022 elections.

2 Week 2: May 8–14

120 submissions: 70 Written, 30 Districting, 6 COI Map, 14 File/Link

Themes this week included COIs, process, district shape, preserving political boundaries, and concerns about partisanship and representation.

COIs: The bulk of written submissions were COI descriptions. Many of the COIs submitted this underscored the importance of preserving counties and townships. With respect to COIs and political boundaries, one commenter wrote: “I think the redistricting commission should not just be asking about communities of interest. They should also be asking about the other side of the coin: If your county, city, township, etc. needs to be split, where does it make the most sense to make the split?”

Shape: Commenters emphasized the importance of four-sided, rectangular districts. One commenter suggested that line-drawers create longer, narrower, lake-oriented districts along the Great Lakes.

Process: A few more comments addressing ID talking about address identification (×3), and a few comments about commission procedure and contracts and the portal interface (×5). Three commenters just want to thank the commission!

Boundaries: Commenters emphasized preserving county boundaries and school districts.

3 Week 3: May 15–21

56 submissions: 36 Written, 15 Districting, 2 COI Map, 3 File/Link

The bulk of written submissions were COI descriptions. Many of the COIs submitted this week explained the importance of preserving a particular county or township. One commenter suggested that communities bordering the Great Lakes are not adequately reflected in the current districts.

Other themes in the comments included district shape, preserving of political boundaries, and concerns are partisanship and representation, and use of algorithms.



Process: Three commenters wrote in support of the Commission’s work. One commenter requested that outreach continue after 2022, and another expressed concern about processing large quantities of public comment.

Shape: Commenters emphasized a preference for compact, square districts that preserve counties and townships.

4 Week 4: May 22–28

101 submissions: 63 Written, 21 Districting, 8 COI Map, 9 File/Link

This was a big week, driven heavily by a redistricting public forum that was held on May 25 in Midland. 18 written submissions came directly from that forum.

Themes included district shape, preserving political boundaries, and concerns about partisanship and representation.

Shape: At least eight comments referenced existing shapes or requested square districts.

Boundaries: At least nine comments referenced the importance of preserving county and municipal boundaries. Two comments emphasized the importance of school districts, with one commenter suggesting the use of school district boundaries as building blocks.

5 Week 5: May 29–June 4

52 submissions: 35 Written, 8 Districting, 5 COI Map, 4 File/Link

Themes this week included COIs, process, district shape, preserving political boundaries, and concerns about partisanship and representation.

Process: Commenters thanked the Commission. A small theme this week emerged with several commenters suggesting that the best practice for redistricting this year is to wipe the slate clean, discarding previous districts and drawing the new boundaries “from scratch.” (Others, in contrast, have been referencing existing districts to suggest modifications.)

Shape: At least six commenters referenced district shape, such as by endorsing compact, square, or convex shapes.

Partisanship: Many commenters expressed concern about partisan gerrymandering and representation. One person emphasized that the distribution of congressional seats should reflect the state as a whole (i.e., partisan proportionality).

6 Week 6: June 5–11

84 submissions: 40 Written, 28 Districting, 15 COI Map, 1 File/Link

This week, themes included COIs, process, district shape, preserving political boundaries, and concerns about partisan gerrymandering.



COIs: At least one commenter expressed concern that COIs could be partisan.

Process: Commenters thanked the commission and suggested that you take advice from a professor named Moon Duchin. (Honest, we did not plant that one!)

Shape: At least six commenters referenced district shape, with some citing the current "odd" shapes and expressing a preference for more compact, square shapes.

Partisanship: Numerous commenters expressed concern about partisan gerrymandering and representation, with a preference for partisan proportionality cited again. Four comments referenced concerns about "safe" seats and would prefer more competitive districts.

7 Week 7: June 12–18

126 submissions: 78 Written, 30 Districting, 14 COI Map, 4 File/Link

Themes this week included COIs, district shape, respecting political and geographic boundaries, and concerns about partisanship and representation.

COIs: Many of the written submissions were COI descriptions. Within the COI-type submissions, sub-themes of economic narratives and community ties emerged. Several of the COI descriptions were written as personal narratives from the submitter and the community they were describing, usually their home for many years. These narratives often spoke about the economic hardships and recoveries that the area experienced over the years, changing socioeconomic areas, and other defining community aspects such as neighborhoods, immigrant communities, and school districts. ([Submission w755](#))

In contrast to the large group of comments describing COIs, there were also a handful of submissions that voiced their opposition to the prioritization of COIs in the redistricting process at all. ([Submission w1083](#))

Shape and boundaries: Many comments emphasized the need to get rid of the current misshapen districts in Michigan and replace them with more compact, logical shapes. Complaints about the current shapes were often explicit mentions of their gerrymandered appearance, and many commenters remarked that these shapes divided what they viewed as their community, especially when towns were divided. One submission specifically focused on the burden to election administration of having mismatches between districts, precincts, and counties. ([Submission 1318](#))

Partisanship and representation: Many commenters expressed discontentment with their current districts and representation. One commenter writes about his experience living in different districts in the Detroit area, where he has noticed communities in districts together that he does not view as cohesive. ([Submission w734](#)) This example mirrors many other submissions in which commenters suggest a subset of towns or areas they see as belonging to their community that should be districted together, as opposed to many pairings in current districts that they do not see as part of their community.



8 Week 8: June 19–25

123 submissions: 69 Written, 39 Districting, 11 COI Map, 4 File/Link

There are multiple concerns about "packing and cracking" and the creation of gerrymandered partisan maps. There was a clear emphasis on creating maps that would maximize competitiveness between the two parties. Competitive districts (or those drawn without partisan intent) are said to encourage bipartisan communication, compromise, and healthy dissent. ([Submission w1001](#))

Several commenters argue that districts should be composed of communities that have things in common, and where communities differ greatly, separations should be drawn; communities should be grouped together as compactly as possible.

Non-partisanship was important to many in the process to create fair maps, and fair representation and voting access for all citizens is crucial. Fairness regarding race and partisanship was also a present theme in some submissions.

9 Week 9: June 26–July 4

294 submissions: 182 Written, 63 Districting, 18 COI Map, 31 File/Link

The Coalition Hub to Advance Redistricting and Grassroots Engagement (CHARGE) is anchored by nine national organizations: APIAVote, Center for Popular Democracy, Common Cause, Fair Count, League of Women Voters, Mi Familia Vota, NAACP, National Congress of American Indians, and State Voices. CHARGE held a training workshop July 1, which we believe drove a high rate of submissions. This week saw a massive increase in overall volume, with more than twice as many submissions as any previous week. Themes included COIs, boundaries, and public service areas.

There was also a major increase in the number of districting plans submitted, and a shift: instead of having mainly Congressional plans, this week saw a large number of Senate and House plans (27 and 26 submissions, respectively—nearly as many as in the first eight weeks combined).

COIs: Many commenters described the ties (or lack thereof) between their city and its neighbors, in order to suggest which should or should not be kept in a common district. As one example of a fairly common theme, one submitter states that they "feel very little in common with the other places in my current Senate district" and lists other counties they would prefer to be grouped with. ([Submission w899](#))

Boundaries: Several commenters shared that they are suspicious of COIs as a redistricting method, and that they will foster racial and political division. They state their preference for relying on pre-existing political boundaries, such as townships, counties, or school districts.

Service areas: Commenters this week expressed a desire for their municipality and utility service areas to be taken into consideration. In one such example, the writer states that "the cities of Grandeville and Wyoming are closely intertwined through agreements of shared water and sewer services; connected emergency fire services; and an overlapping school district. Due to the shared interest of these communities, it makes sense to have a shared legislative representative and advocate in Lansing." ([Submission w1273](#))



10 Week 10: July 5–11

32 submissions: 16 Written, 13 Districting, 3 COI Map, 0 File/Link

This week, the number of submissions dropped back down to earth. Themes this week included economic and environmental concerns.

Geography: Geography and district shape continued to play an important role in many submissions. Urban vs. rural ([Submission w1394](#)) ; Compactness ([Submission w1409](#)).

Consistency: Several commenters expressed a desire to keep the existing districts unchanged ([Submission w1416](#)). We note that this is not permitted by federal law.

Economic activity continues to be featured in many community descriptions. Personal narratives and social and ethnic commonality structure how many people view their communities and the opportunities afforded by independent redistricting ([Submission w1462](#)). Many commenters mentioned topics such as pollution and environmental issues of concern when describing their communities. These concerns are often cited in tandem with industrial presence ([Submission w1405](#)).

11 Week 11: July 12–18

68 submissions: 36 Written, 15 Districting, 5 COI Map, 3 File/Link

This week, the number of submissions remained somewhat stable, but with a number of near-repeat comments describing a COI in the Tri-Cities area. These commenters called for making the Tri-Cities a single district, emphasizing similar cultural and economic interests, detailing cultural events, major employers, and media outlets ([Submission w1520](#)), ([Submission w1485](#)). Frequently they included a specific list of local media outlets: “Midland, Bay City, Saginaw, and Flint are a community of interest because they share news and radio stations (WNEM, WEYI, WJRT, WSGW, WIOG, WCEN, WHNN, WKCQ),” a list of local employers: “Some regional corporations that operate in the Tri-Cities and Flint are Michigan Sugar, General Motors, Dow Chemical, and S.C Johnson,” and cultural centers: “They share cultural events and sports such as Dow Diamond with Great Lakes Loons, Midland Center for the Arts, Dow Event Center with Saginaw Spirit..”. A few other unique submissions advocated for a district containing the Tri-Cities, pointing to the frequency of residents traveling across the area to go to restaurants, receive healthcare, or work ([Submission w1479](#)).

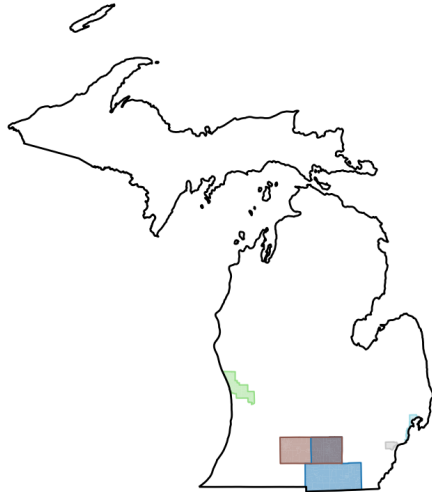
Other popular topics included geography, partisanship, and contiguity.

Geography: Several people mentioned wanted to keep rural and urban areas separate, a common theme across the weeks ([Submission w1501](#)), ([Submission w1480](#)).

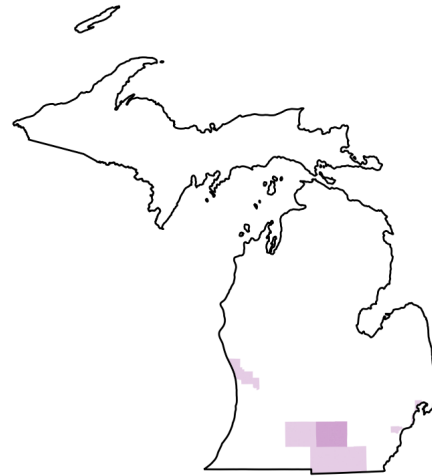
Contiguity: Some commenters specifically wanted their community to merge with an adjacent district ([Submission w1480](#)), ([Submission w1449](#)). Others were focused on contiguity as a broader ideal for drawing districts ([Submission w1450](#)).

Partisanship: Several people were concerned about fairness, gerrymandering and partisanship, but they were more positive than usual ([Submission w1507](#)). A couple people mentioned their confidence in the commission ([Submission w1474](#)).

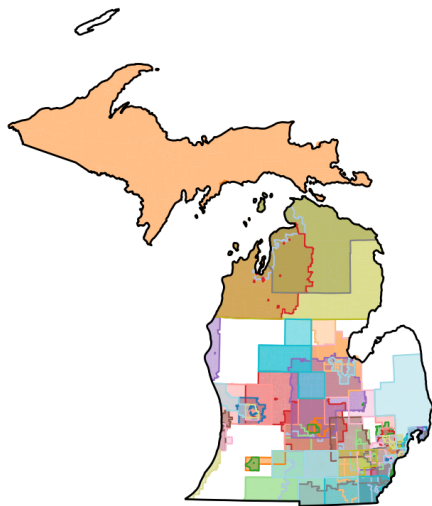
12 COI coverage maps



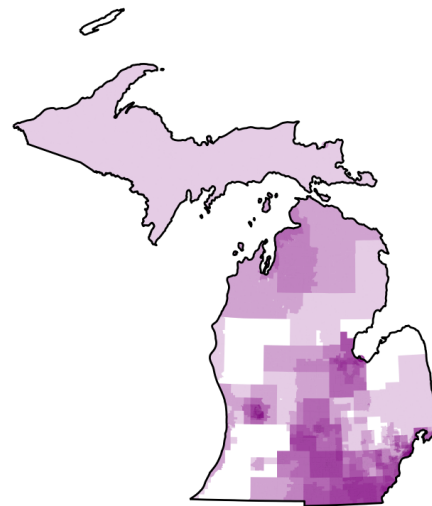
Week 11 COIs (5 areas)



Week 11 COI Heatmap

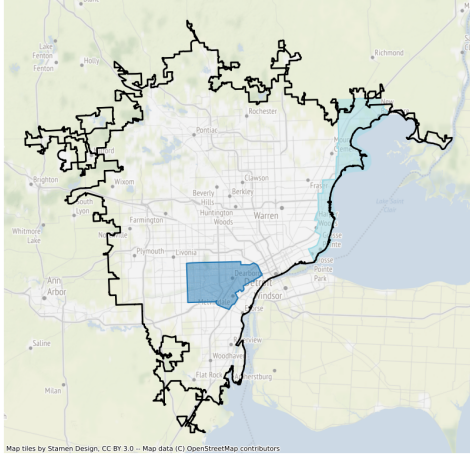


Cumulative COIs (130 areas)

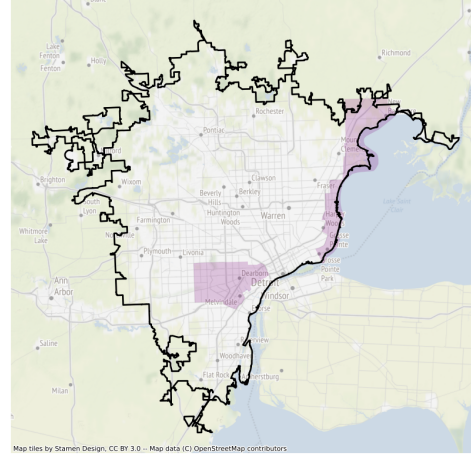


Cumulative COI Heatmap

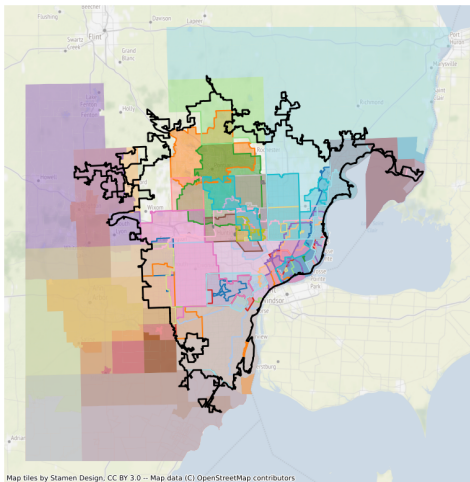
Figure 1. Michigan Communities of Interest



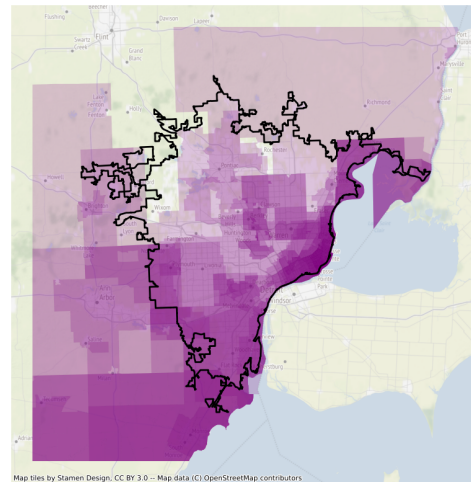
Week 11 COIs (2 areas)



Week 11 COI Heatmap



Cumulative COIs (81 areas)



Cumulative COI Heatmap

Figure 2. Metro Detroit Communities of Interest