


# City of Alexandria, Virginia

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** NOVEMBER 3, 2021

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER 

**SUBJECT:** REDISTRICTING PROCESS UPDATE

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**ISSUE:** The purpose of the memorandum is to provide an update on the process of redistricting for the City as a result of the 2020 Census.

**BACKGROUND:** Virginia Code 24.2-304.1 requires redistricting of governing bodies to occur in 2021 based on 2020 census data. The State will redistrict both its Congressional districts and its House of Delegates and State Senate districts. Since City Council elections are at-large, there are no changes required to be made for City Council. Because School Board members are elected in three districts, the City is required to review and consider school board districts and precinct changes for the 2024 election based on the results of the Virginia Redistricting Commission and block by block census data to ensure that, pursuant to the requirements of Va. Code §24.2-307, precincts in Alexandria are wholly contained within school board districts, congressional, delegate, and state senate districts, and to ensure the districts continue to comply with overarching Constitutional requirements.

### **Virginia Redistricting Commission**

The Virginia Redistricting Commission (the Commission) was approved by Virginia voters last year. This Commission, comprised of eight legislators and eight citizens, was tasked with proposing maps for House of Delegate, State Senate, and House of Representatives districts to deliver to the General Assembly for an up or down vote. The General Assembly does not have the right to change the maps submitted by the Commission, just approve or disapprove. The Commission has met several times over the summer and fall, held public hearings and reviewed maps proposed by Democratic- and Republican-selected mapmakers. The Virginia Redistricting Commission has considered several maps but has not come to agreement on those maps. If the Commission does not deliver a proposed map to the General Assembly by October 25, Virginia Code directs the Virginia Supreme Court to establish the districts for the House of Delegates and State Senate Districts, and later also for the House of Representatives. When the State process reaches some resolution, these maps could require changes to City precincts to ensure its precincts are wholly contained in House of Delegates, State Senate, and House of Representative districts.

### **Legal Requirements for City Precincts**

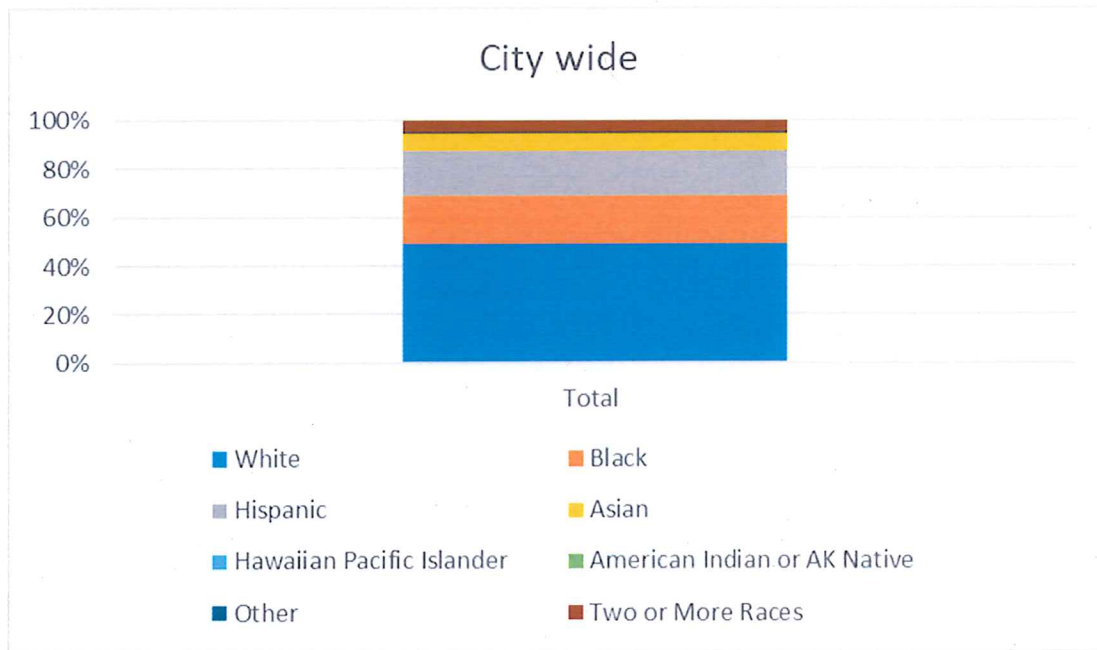
As a general matter, School Board election districts must comply with three overarching principles:

1) They must be “substantially” equal in population (*Evenwel v. Abbott*, 136 S. Ct. 1120 (2016)), *i.e.*, they must have population differences no greater than 10 percent.

2) They must be compact and contiguous with clearly observable boundaries (Va. Constitution Article VII, §5; Va. Code §24.2-304.1 and §24.2-305); and

3) They must not be drawn to discriminate based on race (14th Amendment to the Constitution, Voting Rights Act of 1965). Further, local election districts may not change within 60 days of a general election (Va. Code §24.2-306).

The City received initial results from the Census Bureau earlier in the fall. The following chart shows the demographic composition of the City based on the 2020 census.



Since City Council seats are at-large, there are no changes to precinct boundaries required based on the current census information. That result could change if House and Senate district boundaries produced by the state result in split precincts after the state redistricting process is complete.

While City Council seats do not require a change, an initial review of the 2020 census data indicates that City Council will need to adjust School Board Districts before the next election in 2023 to maintain compliance with voting rights laws. The current demographic make-up of the three School Board Districts based on 2020 census data includes the following:

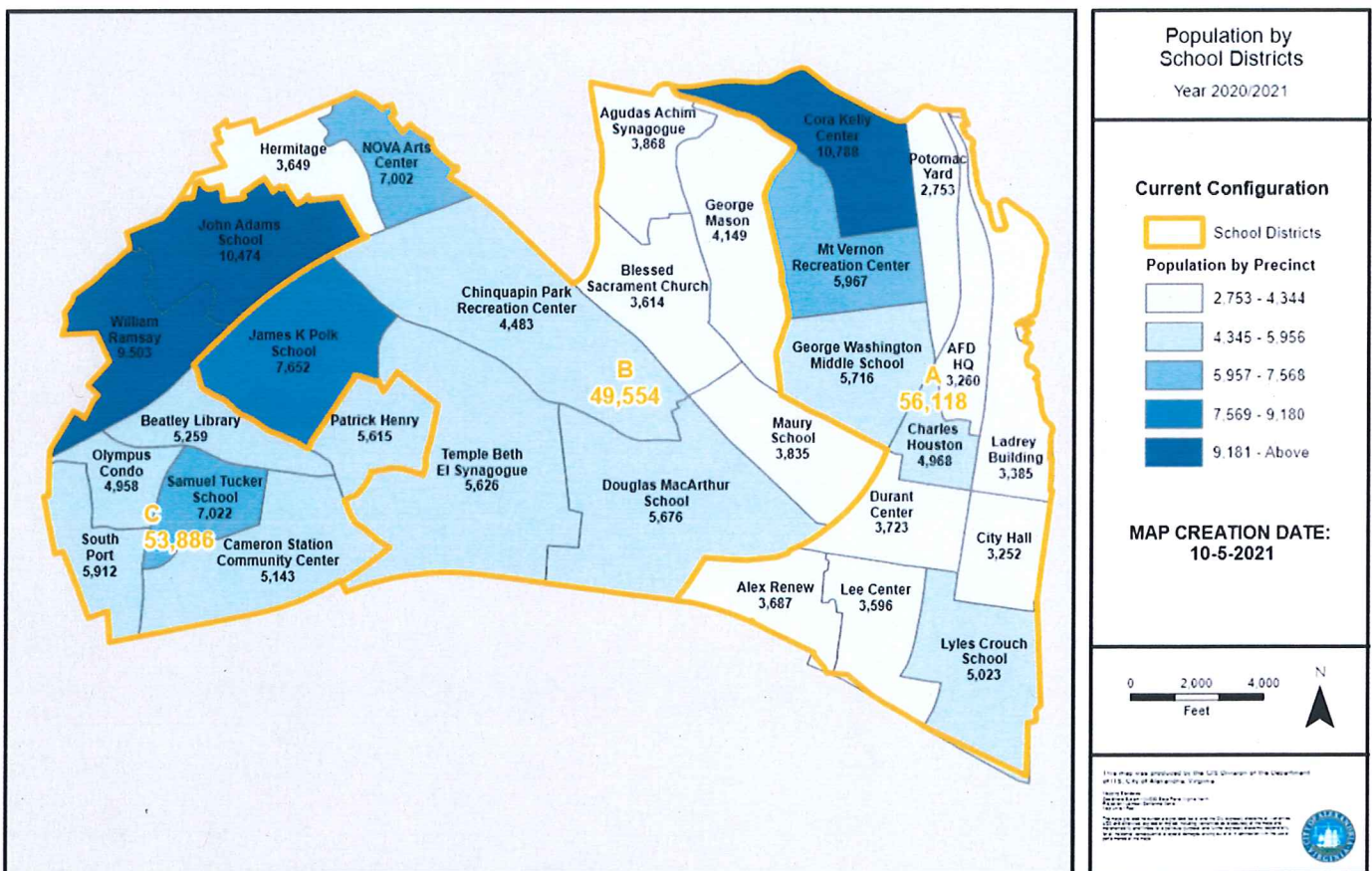
| School District | White   | Black   | Hispanic | Asian   | Hawaiian | American | Other   | Two or  |        |
|-----------------|---------|---------|----------|---------|----------|----------|---------|---------|--------|
|                 | Current | Current | Current  | Current | Current  | Current  | Current | Current | Total  |
| A               | 34,225  | 6,869   | 9,569    | 2,517   | 26       | 65       | 339     | 2,550   | 56,160 |
| B               | 28,381  | 7,317   | 7,987    | 2,947   | 27       | 75       | 286     | 2,487   | 49,507 |
| C               | 15,913  | 17,128  | 11,816   | 5,741   | 24       | 77       | 401     | 2,700   | 53,800 |

Based on this data, District A has a population larger than is acceptable to provide equitable access, and District B has too few voters represented. This means that some residents in District A would need to change to another district in order to maintain equal representation across the current three district composition.

While there can be a variety of ways to balance the districts, the AlexRenew precinct, with 3,819 residents, could be moved from District A to District B and achieve representation that is similar to the current representation for both Districts A and B. The following tables, based on 2020 census data, reflects the three districts if the Alex Renew precinct moved to District B.

| School District | White  | Black  | Hispanic | Asian | Hawaiian<br>Pacific | American<br>Indian or | Other | Two or<br>More | Total  |
|-----------------|--------|--------|----------|-------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------|----------------|--------|
| A               | 31,850 | 6,344  | 9,205    | 2,174 | 24                  | 60                    | 317   | 2,367          | 52,341 |
| B               | 30,756 | 7,842  | 8,351    | 3,290 | 29                  | 80                    | 308   | 2,670          | 53,326 |
| C               | 15,913 | 17,128 | 11,816   | 5,741 | 24                  | 77                    | 401   | 2,700          | 53,800 |

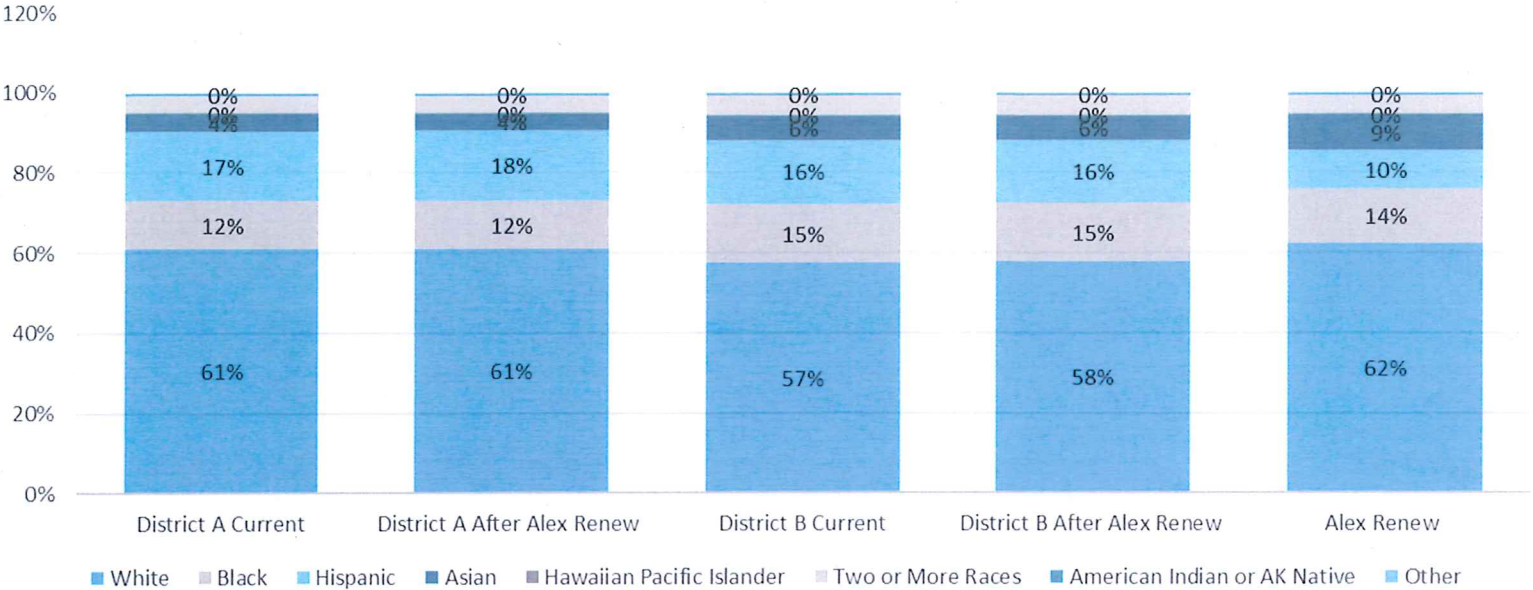
The following map shows the current precinct make up for the three School Board districts with AlexRenew highlighted in yellow.





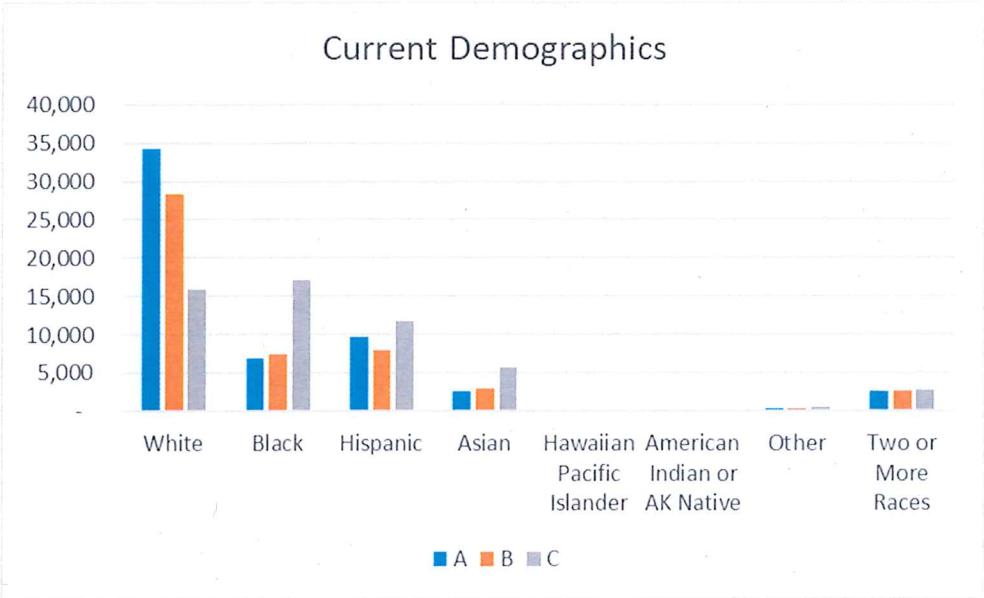
The chart below illustrates the composition of Districts A and B currently and if Alex Renew were moved to District B.

### DISTRICT A AND B AND ALEX RENEW DEMOGRAPHICS



Making these changes in order to comply with the Voting Act does not preclude the City from making future changes to School Board districts as long as those changes are made in time to be used for the next school board election currently scheduled for 2024.

**Current Composition of School Board Districts**  
Moving the AlexRenew precincts would keep the district totals in compliance with the requirements of the Voting Act. The table on the right illustrates the composition of all three School Board Districts by race.



**Status of state redistricting**

Staff will continue to monitor the activities of the Commission and report back if additional changes are warranted based on the actions of the Commission, the General Assembly or the Supreme Court. As of the Commission's October 21<sup>st</sup> meeting, no maps have been produced and future meetings have been cancelled.

On October 13, 2021, a lawsuit was filed to request that all seats be re-contested in 2022 based on the approved reapportionment once it is complete. The suit alleges that the elections being held in 2021 are not based on the current census and, therefore, require new elections based on the 2020 census. No ruling has been made on this lawsuit.

**NEXT STEPS:** The City will need to make the legally required changes to School Board before the next election. Based on current information, the change for Alex Renew results in districts that are comparable to the current district with the least number of precinct changes pending additional information from the Virginia Redistricting Commission or the General Assembly.

In addition, as part of the legislative review, City Code must also be updated to reflected precinct changes made and approved by Council over the last twenty years. The code for changing precincts has been updated as needed; the corresponding precinct adjustments to the School Board districts also require ordinance updates. While these changes could be updated at any time, staff recommends bringing these changes to Council once we have more information about the State House and Senate District apportionments.

**Cc:** Angela Turner, General Registrar  
Shawn Lassiter, Assistant City Attorney  
Dr. Gregory Hutchings, Superintendent, ACPS  
Meagan Alderton, Chair, ACPS School Board