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The Unregistered Voter Map Project

Travis County, Texas

Submitted by:

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BRUCE ELFANT

TAX ASSESSOR - COLLECTOR
VOTER REGISTRAR

The Unregistered Voter Map Project

BACKGROUND

Travis County, at the heart of Texas and home to the state capitol in Austin, has a growing population of more than 1.1 million. The office of the County Tax Assessor-Collector / Voter Registrar houses the Voter Registration Division and part of the division includes the Voter Outreach Program. Chief among the Voter Outreach Coordinator's responsibilities is attending an average of 300 events per year to promote voter registration and overseeing the activities of Travis County's 3,100+ Volunteer Deputy Registrars (VDRs). The goal of the VDR program is to register all eligible citizens to vote, and they do so by knocking on doors in their communities and neighborhoods. Prior to 2013, VDRs had little to no indication of the registration status of the people who resided behind each door they approached.

OVERVIEW

Along with the New Year, January of 2013 brought to Travis County a newly elected Tax Assessor/Collector & Voter Registrar, a second GIS Analyst position in the Voter Registration Division, and a rejuvenated focus on voter registration within the Tax Office. The Tax Assessor/Collector & Voter Registrar, Bruce Elfant, initiated a collaboration effort with the entire Voter Registration Division to explore avenues through which Travis County could increase the number of registered voters. The new GIS Analyst, Tommy Miller, provided an additional resource that would allow for the development of solutions involving spatial data. One of the ideas generated in brainstorming sessions was mapping the locations of unregistered voters to help identify specific areas of the community that are underrepresented. Subsequent meetings, discussions, and research eventually resulted in the development of an innovative project that maps the addresses of unregistered voters and is accessible online.

THE PROJECT

The ongoing Unregistered Voter (UV) Map Project spans Travis County in its entirety and maps all unregistered addresses and suspended voters (i.e., those who have likely moved). Multi-family homes and apartment complexes with more than ten associated registered voters are labeled on the map with the total number of voters at that address, allowing community members to compare the voter counts with other information they obtain about the size of the multi-family home or apartment complex. The final product is partitioned by election precinct making it easy to form a plan of action for their local areas, and because voter registration is dynamic, the maps are updated monthly.

The creation of the UV Maps took several months to design, implement, and troubleshoot. Among the difficulties overcome during the completion of the project were removing vacant lots, including only residential areas, varying map scales and orientations based on differing precinct sizes and shapes, adding suspended voters and associated lists of addresses mapped, and automating monthly updates. The project was successfully completed in August of 2013, and became available to the public in early September of 2013 through the Travis County Tax Office's website (www.traviscountytax.org). During the launch period, the GIS team held information sessions for VDRs to demonstrate the new maps and solicit feedback. The VDRs were a valuable resource, contributing improvements such as adding a printed address list with the map so volunteers could easily coordinate block walking campaigns. The subsequent media campaign expanded the reach of the project to media, researchers, political parties, and community organizers. As a result, there have been approximately 4000 visits to the UV Maps web page.

OUTCOME

The Unregistered Voter Map Project is winning much praise from VDRs, the public, and elections professionals. When asked what the VDRs think of the newly released UV Maps, Travis County's Voter Outreach Coordinator, Cheryl Reese, said, "They love them. And they use them. [The UV Maps] allow for a targeted plan of action that saves them time and effort and produces a better result. They register more people in less time." The UV Maps have become an essential resource for the VDRs as they continue to help push the total number of registered voters in Travis County even further past the current count of more than 635,000, the largest number of registered voters in Travis County's history. With these efforts, we recovered the 2012 canceled purged voters in the same fiscal year – historically it has taken two fiscal years to accomplish this goal – cutting the recovery time in half!

CONTACT

Please direct any questions about Travis County's Unregistered Voter Map Project to:

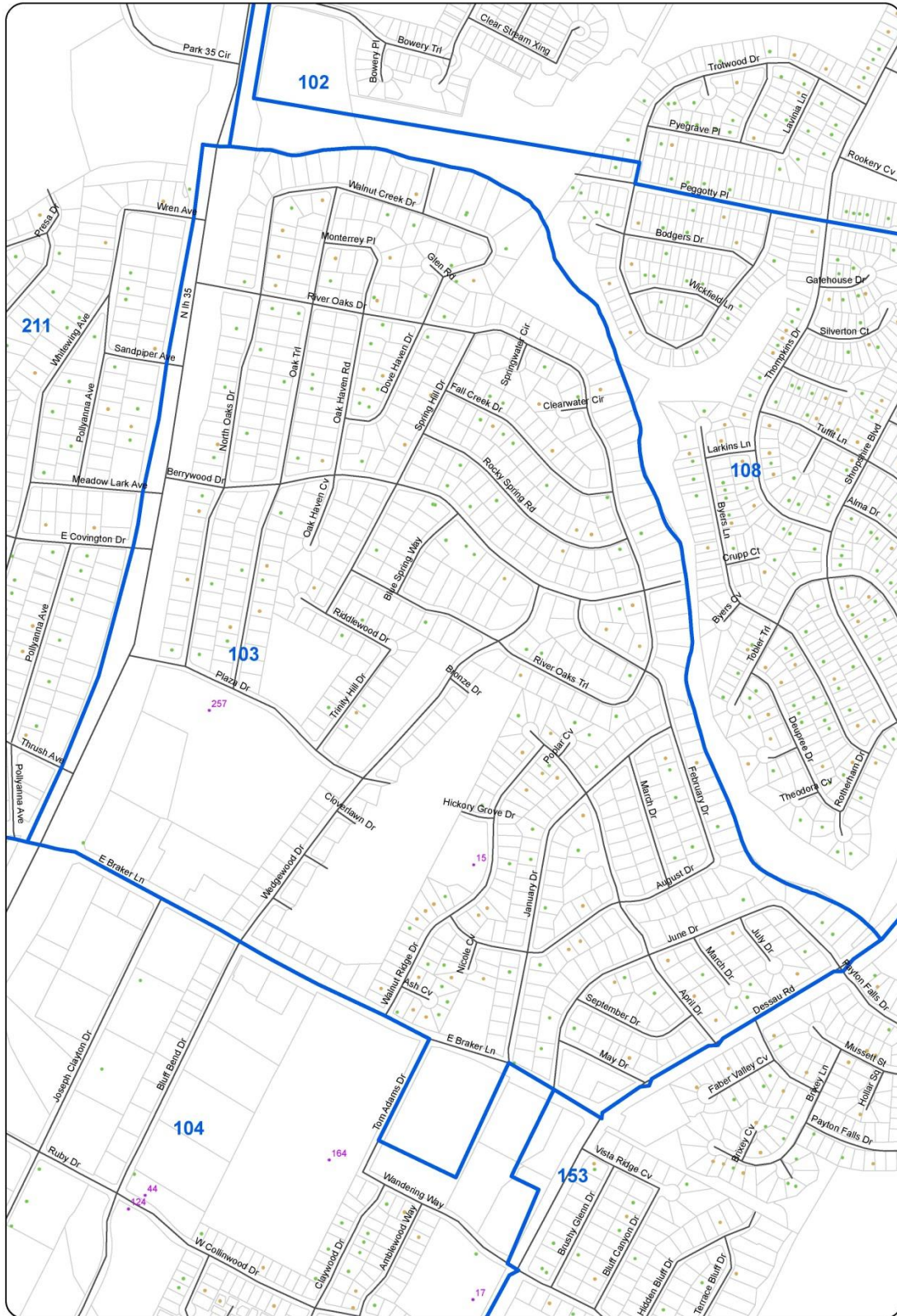
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Travis County Tax Office, Voter Registration Division

Example Unregistered Voter Map (Originally 11" x 17")

Unregistered Addresses And Suspended Registered Voters In Precinct 103



- Suspended Registered Voter*
- Unregistered Address
- Address w/ 10+ Registered Voters (labeled w/ # reg.)

*A suspended registered voter has hady moved from the mapped location, but is still eligible to vote.



Travis County Tax Office
 Voter Registration Division
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This map was created by the Travis County Voter Registration Department as a courtesy and is not intended for any other use. No warranty is made regarding the accuracy or completeness of the information. It is not used to register and provide accurate maps and data. Voter registration and voting are the responsibility of the voter. Thank you for your contribution.

Example Address List, First Page Only

Address	Status	Precinct
11305 1/2 N IH 35		103
11301 APRIL DR	Sus.	103
11305 APRIL DR	Sus.	103
11308 APRIL DR		103
11311 APRIL DR	Sus.	103
11504 APRIL DR		103
11602 APRIL DR	Sus.	103
11608 APRIL DR	Sus.	103
11613 APRIL DR		103
1100 ASH CV	Sus.	103
1103 ASH CV	Sus.	103
1104 ASH CV		103
1105 ASH CV	Sus.	103
1106 ASH CV		103
1107 ASH CV		103
1209 AUGUST DR	Sus.	103
1211 AUGUST DR	Sus.	103
1212 AUGUST DR	Sus.	103
1009 BERRYWOOD DR		103
1011 BERRYWOOD DR	Sus.	103
822 BERRYWOOD DR		103
904 BERRYWOOD DR		103
905 1/2 BERRYWOOD DR		103
905 BERRYWOOD DR		103
908 BERRYWOOD DR		103
911 BERRYWOOD DR		103
913 BERRYWOOD DR		103
919 BERRYWOOD DR	Sus.	103
11603 BLUE SPRING WAY		103
1110 1/2 E BRAKER LN		103
1212 E BRAKER LN		103
900 CLEARWATER CIR	Sus.	103
11804 DOVE HAVEN DR		103
11806 DOVE HAVEN DR		103
11808 DOVE HAVEN DR	Sus.	103
11907 1/2 DOVE HAVEN DR		103
12001 DOVE HAVEN DR		103
12002 DOVE HAVEN DR		103
12007 DOVE HAVEN DR	Sus.	103
12008 DOVE HAVEN DR		103
12009 DOVE HAVEN DR		103
12015 DOVE HAVEN DR		103
904 FALL CREEK DR		103

The UV Maps are available [online](#) for download in pdf format, with the first page of the pdf being the map and the subsequent pages being the list of addresses that are pictured in the map.



Bruce Elfant, Travis County Tax Assessor-Collector and Voter Registrar

News Release

Communications Division

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Public Inquiries: Travis County Tax Office | (512) 854-9473 | tax_office@co.travis.tx.us | www.traviscountytax.org

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VOLUNTEERS USE TECHNOLOGY TO REGISTER VOTERS



Austin, TX - The development of a new voter registration tool that identifies where potential voters live in Travis County is helping volunteers target their voter registration efforts. At the request of various members of the community including political parties, volunteer deputy registrars and candidates for political office, Voter Registrar Bruce Elfant initiated a project to design maps showing the location of unregistered voters by precinct. He commented, "The map idea was hatched in a brainstorming session that included Travis County Voter Registration GIS Analysts Melinda Avey and Tommy Miller."

The members of the GIS team started with census data and files showing the current location of registered voters. By combining the address files from the City of Austin with voter registration records, they were able to plot the location of known addresses that do not indicate a resident registered voter. The exported data was used to generate 240 precinct maps with dots showing suspended voters and potential or "unregistered" voters.

The unregistered voter maps were made available to the public online at <http://www.traviscountytax.org/goVotersJurisdictionInfo.do>, and volunteers were invited to come view a demonstration and ask questions about the project. Not long after the maps were made available, volunteer deputy registrars suggested improvements such as a street listing to accompany

each map, monthly updates, and the removal of vacant lots from the listings. The GIS team was able to implement these changes within days.



Precinct Chair Mary Ann Neely hosts an event to mobilize voter registration in her neighborhood using unregistered voter maps.

Mary Ann Neely, a 30-year veteran chair for Travis County precinct 342, took advantage of the unregistered voter maps to mobilize neighborhood volunteers. She arranged for deputy registrar training at her home for 16 volunteers. Part of the event included an enlarged map displayed on an easel. Volunteers were invited to sign up to canvass streets and mark the huge map. Mary Ann then compiled the information and prepared individual maps and lists in a packet volunteers picked up the next week. “Each of us had about 20 people to reach,” said

Mary Ann. “I will remind everyone with calls and emails.”

For questions about becoming a Volunteer Deputy Registrar or for more information about unregistered voter maps, call 512-854-9473 or go to www.traviscountytax.org.