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TARRANT COUNTY ELECTIONS ADMINISTRATION

Methodology and criteria for selecting locations for the Countywide Polling Place Program

Tarrant County will collect and update data related to each precinct in the county, and to each location used in an election. This information will be used when selecting the locations to be used in any given election. It is the goal of the Elections Administration to:

- Identify locations that are most accessible and convenient to voters.
- Be as consistent as possible from one election to the next in the usage of locations, thus eliminating voter confusion.
- Work towards reducing the number of schools used.

Criteria for evaluation of candidate locations

The following criteria are applied when evaluating a location for being used as a vote center in Tarrant County

I. ADA Compliance

Accessibility for voters with disabilities is of outmost importance when selecting a location. Therefore, locations that are fully compliant with the accessibility requirements have a priority in being used as voting locations. Sites that are not fully compliant, but that have deficiencies that can be mitigated by the Elections Administration, will be categorized the following way:

- a. Major issues:
 - Lack of ADA Parking: this can be compensated by artificially creating handicap parking spaces using cones and signs.
 - Inadequate access ramps: this can be compensated (in some cases) by using portable ramps of different sizes that help reduce the slope of the existing infrastructure.
- b. Minor issues:
 - Door knobs: sites that may not have the right door knobs may still be used if the poll works have a line of sight that may enable them to supervise the access door and aid voters.
 - Rugs and mats: certain door lips may be overcome by adding rugs or mats to the material sent to the polling place.

The preference for sites is sites with no issues, then sites with no major issues and last sites with major issues. Sites that are not compliant and with issues that cannot be mitigated will continue to be not-eligible to be used as polling places.

II. Connectivity

In order to apply for the Countywide Polling Place Program, a County must implement “*a computerized voter registration list that allows an election officer at the polling place to verify that a voter has not previously voted in the election*”¹. Connectivity is essential for the Electronic Poll Books to send information in real time. **Locations with poor or no connectivity are not eligible to be used as Vote Centers.**

III. Proximity to another site:

When sites are located less than two (2) miles of each other, they will be evaluated to determine if some of them can be eliminated.

IV. Transportation access

To factor in the difficulties voters may face when going to the polling place, Tarrant County will use the data available from the US Census Bureau related to vehicle ownership (available at <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>). Using this data, **Tarrant County will retain locations in precincts where the percentage of households with 1 or 0 vehicles is over 35%** whenever the location is in a city that has no public transportation system available.

V. Parking

The more parking available the more desirable the location is for using it as a polling place.

VI. Usage history

During the transition into Vote Centers, **the Elections Administration will prioritize locations that can and have been used in every election, both in Early Voting and on Election Day**. The purpose here is to make it easier for voters to locate a place where they can cast their ballot, and to reduce the usage of remote or low turnout locations.

VII. Public building

Public buildings are preferred over private facilities, the main reason being that a public building must be made available for an election² and that there is no cost associated with using the location.

VIII. Schools

Tarrant County Elections Administration will **prefer using locations that are not schools**, except when school design is appropriate for conducting elections. Concerns expressed by several School Districts, School Staff members and parents of students are the main motivation.

¹ Texas Election Code, Section 43.007 (d) (3)

² T.E.C. Sec. 43.031 (c): “The building selected for a polling place shall be a public building if practicable. The entity that owns or controls a public building shall make the building available for use as a polling place...”

IX. Power backup

Locations that have Power Backup options available (e.g. power plants) **are more desirable** because they aid in guaranteeing continuity of the election in case of certain contingencies.

Considering the needs of precincts

Voting habits can vary greatly within specific communities. When considering a location for being added or removed for future elections, the following data related to the precincts will be reviewed:

I. Turnout on Election Day

How many voters from a given precinct prefer to vote on Election Day? **The higher the turnout on election day, the more convenient it will be to retain the location within the precinct.** Using data from the last even-year November election, the following values determined:

- Locations where more than 500 votes were cast on election day will be placed on the keep list.
- Locations where less than 100 votes were cast on election day will be placed on the Eliminations list.

II. Party voting

The County will avoid eliminating locations that are located in precincts with a strong tendency of voting for a given party. Strong tendency is defined as a party receiving more than 75% of the votes in a precinct. The number of votes a party receives in an election is calculated the following way:

- Using the results from the last primary election, add the number of DEM and REP ballots cast and calculate a % of REP. Numbers above 75% and below 25% are in the “keep” category.

III. Registered Voters over 65

Voters over the age of 65 tend to have the most limitations for traveling long distances. **Precincts with large populations of voters over the age of 65 are more likely to retain in-precinct locations** under the Countywide Polling Place Program.

IV. Minority population

Precincts with large populations of minority voters are more likely to retain in-precinct locations under the Countywide Polling Place Program.

Discretion of the Elections Administrator

Whenever the rules described above generate opposing recommendations, the Elections Administration will use discretion to recommend placing the location on the Keep or the Eliminations list. In these cases, the decision must be accompanied by a justification when presenting the recommendation to Commissioners Court.