

Countywide Polling Place Program

Fort Bend County Office of Elections
Administration



Why do we have Precinct based voting?

- *Planning: Election Officials historically needed to know how many resources to devote to each poll.*
- *Management: Number of ballot styles could be limited, paper poll books could be specific to a neighborhood.*

Technology frees us from historical constraints of precinct based voting.

- *Electronic Voting Systems allow all ballot styles to be available in each polling location.*
- *Electronic Poll Books allow poll workers to access registration records to be condensed to laptops or notepads and also allow easy assignment of correct ballot styles to any voter.*

What are Countywide Polling Places?

- *Often called Vote Centers, Countywide Polling Places allow voters to cast a ballot at any polling locations within the county.*
- *In this respect, they offer the convenience of Early Voting, but on Election Day.*

History of Vote Centers

2003 - Larimer County, Colorado pilot program

2006 - Indiana pilot program in 5 counties

2006 - 78th Texas Legislature authorizes pilot and Lubbock County conducts its November Election using Countywide polling places.

2011 - Colorado, Indiana, Iowa, Texas, North Dakota, South Dakota, Tennessee, & Utah have all approved the use of Vote Centers.

26 Texas Counties using County wide Polling Places in November 2014

- Callahan
- Collin
- Coryell
- Eastland
- Erath
- Floyd
- Gaines
- Galveston
- Grayson
- Jefferson
- Lampasas
- Lubbock
- Madison
- McLennan
- Midland
- Montague
- Navarro
- Randall
- Rusk
- Swisher
- Taylor
- Tom Green
- Travis
- Victoria
- Wharton
- Williamson

Neighboring Counties using Vote Centers in 2015

Madison

Jefferson

Wharton

Galveston

Brazoria



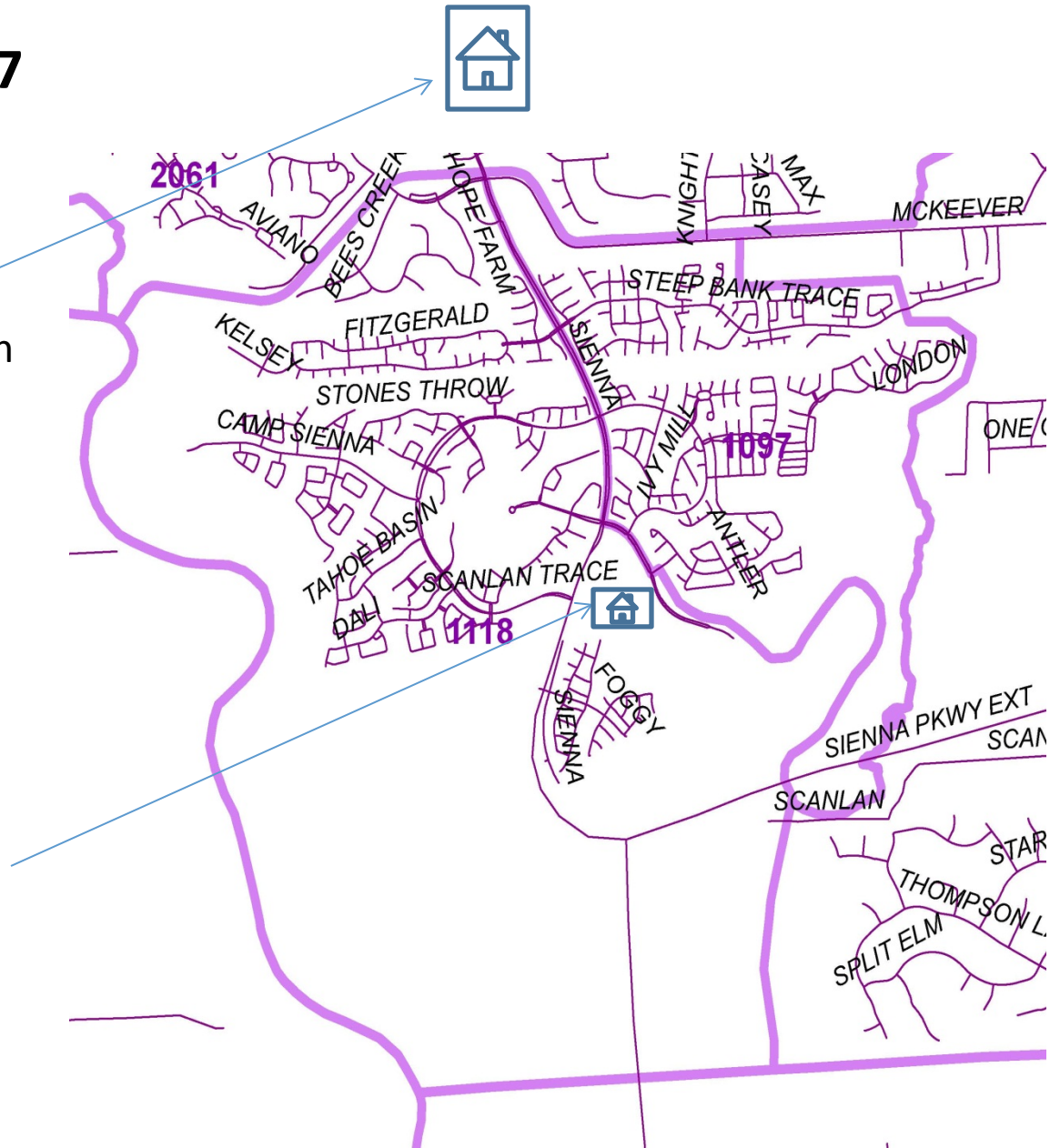
Advantages of Vote Centers

- *Voter Convenience - citizens can vote near home, work, or school.*
- *Polling locations can be adapted to meet rapid growth and are not limited by precinct lines.*
- *Future Cost Savings - fewer locations to staff and fewer to equip.*
- *Turnout – Because of convenience, turnout may increase.*

Precincts 1118 & 1097 Sienna Plantation

8,084 voters share a common polling place, FBC Library at Sienna.

A second polling location is available but would require voters to drive south to vote which is against the normal traffic pattern.



Future Cost Savings

- *Current Voting System is 10 years old, but is only certified to 2000 standards.*
- *Replacing it with a precinct based system would cost approximately \$5.8 million if population growth were to stop today.*
- *Replacing it in 2022 will cost approximately \$8.5 million (in 2015 dollars) if population growth continues at same rate.*
- *Equipping 60 Voter centers and 25 Early Voting sites in 2022 would cost approximately \$5 million.*

What steps are required to implement a Countywide polling place program

- *Elections Administrator submits a notice of intent to participate to the SOS*
- *Commissioners Court Sets dates for public hearing(s)*
- *Elections Administrator selects members of a Vote Center Advisory Committee and submits to Commissioner's Court for approval.*
- *County holds Public Hearings*

What Equipment is required to implement a Countywide Polling Place Program in Texas

- *County must use a direct recording electronic (DRE) voting system.*
- *County must use a computerized voter registration list that allows instantaneous verification that a voter has not voted at another poll.*

Other Requirements

- *County must hold a public hearing to inform and solicit public opinion.*
- *County must develop a methodology to determine the placement of the countywide polling places.*
- *County must develop a plan for giving notice and informing voters of the changes.*
- *County must submit a written application to the Secretary of State along with recording or transcripts of public hearings.*

Suggested Public Hearings to be held April 13-24, 2015

- Fort Bend County Rosenberg Annex
- Sugar Land City Hall
- Precinct 2 – JP Court
- Precinct 3 – JP Court
- FBC Library at Sienna

Public Hearings are designed to solicit input from:

- *Voters*
- *Political Parties*
- *Other Political Organizations*
- *Members of the Minority Communities*
- *Members of Disabled Community*
- *Representatives of Political Subdivisions*

Public Hearings will provided feedback on:

- *Location of Polling Places*
- *Methodology for selection of Election Judges & Alternate Judges*
- *Effective methods of communicating the program to voters*

Polling Locations

- In November 2015 we would be required to have a number of polling places not less than 65% of the number used in the last equivalent election – November 2013.
- If deemed successful, in future elections we could reduce to 50%.

Polling Locations

- *In November 2013 we opened 83 Election Day polls. Under Texas guidelines we could reduce to 54 vote centers in November 2013.*
- *Would anticipate opening approximately 70-75 sites until voting patterns determined that a location was underutilized.*
- *Would anticipate using approximately 60 current sites plus 10-15 new sites.*

What current polling places might be eliminated ?

- *Those that do not meet ADA requirements*
- *Those in close proximity to other sites*
- *Those of inadequate size and inadequate parking.*

Will Election Judge and Alternate Judge positions be eliminated?

- *Currently only 50% of our positions, 145 of 286 positions are filled.*
- *146 Judges & Alternates would be required to staff 73 Voter Centers.*
- *The number of Spanish speaking workers required to conduct an election would decrease.*
- *Votes Center would provide us opportunity to offer language assistance in other languages representative of Fort Bend County.*

In what Elections would we use Countywide Polling Places ?

Once adopted, the countywide polling place program would be in effect for all elections conducted by the FBC elections department.

- Federal and State Elections
- County Elections
- Primary Elections
- Local City, School, and MUD elections conducted as part of a Joint Election Agreement by FBC Elections.