Convening a team of specialists

Geo-Enabling Elections

May 6, 2021

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Housekeeping

- **Slides** are available on the registration page
- Use the **chat panel** to say hello, chat with other attendees, and ask questions

What we'll cover today

- Identify local and state partners to support your future GIS work and goals
- Prioritize initial conversation topics with partners to set your team up for success
- Communicate the benefits of partnering with peer offices on GIS projects

Today’s agenda

- Introduction (5 minutes)
- Intro to Geo-Enabled Elections (10 minutes)
- Where to find specialists (10 minutes)
- Convening your team (10 minutes)
- Case Study (10 mins)
- Q&A (10 minutes)
- Wrapping up and course survey (5 minutes)

Hello, there!

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National States Geographic Information Council

Best Practices for Geo-Enabling Elections

Source: “Raising Election Accuracy and Efficiency with GIS,” NSGIC 2019

An introduction

Geo-Enabled Elections

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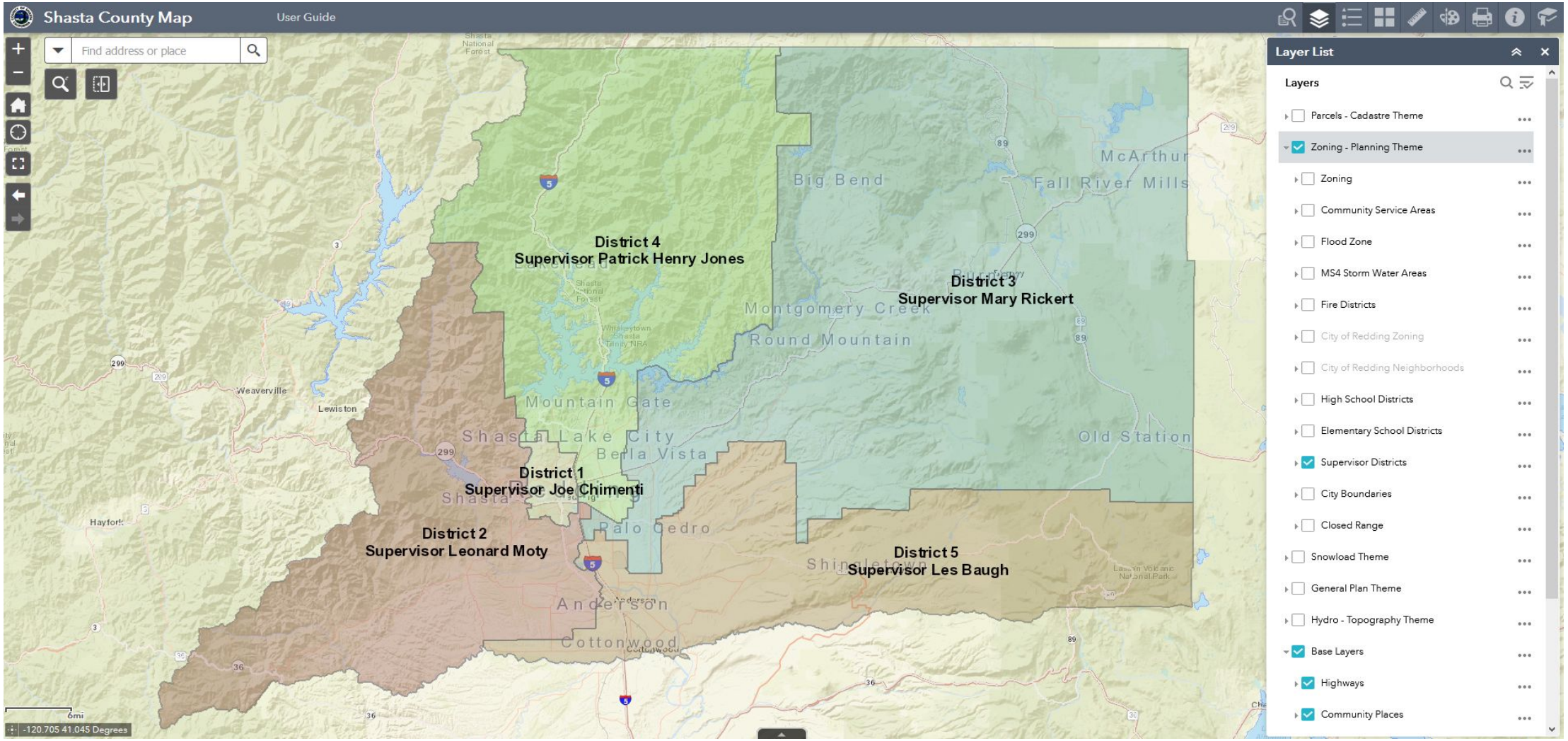
Shasta County, CA - GIS



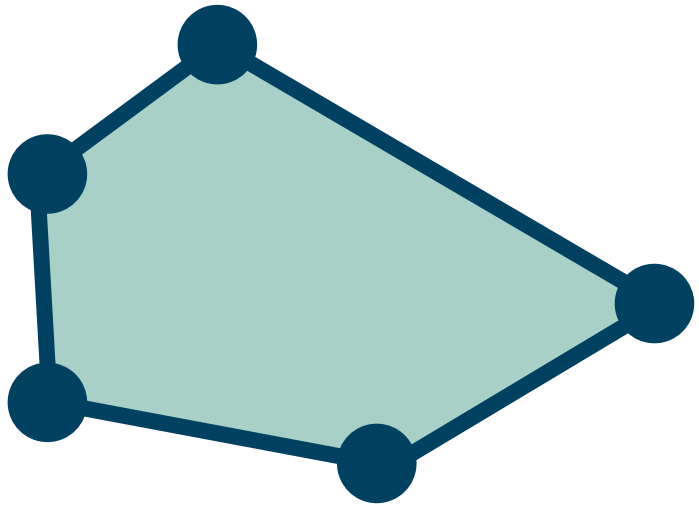
Source: Shasta County, CA 2021

Vocabulary & concepts

- GIS (Geographic Information System)
- Geo-Enabled Elections
- Political boundary
  - Precinct

Basic GIS concepts

- Points
- Lines
- Polygons



Why geo-enable elections?

Improved:

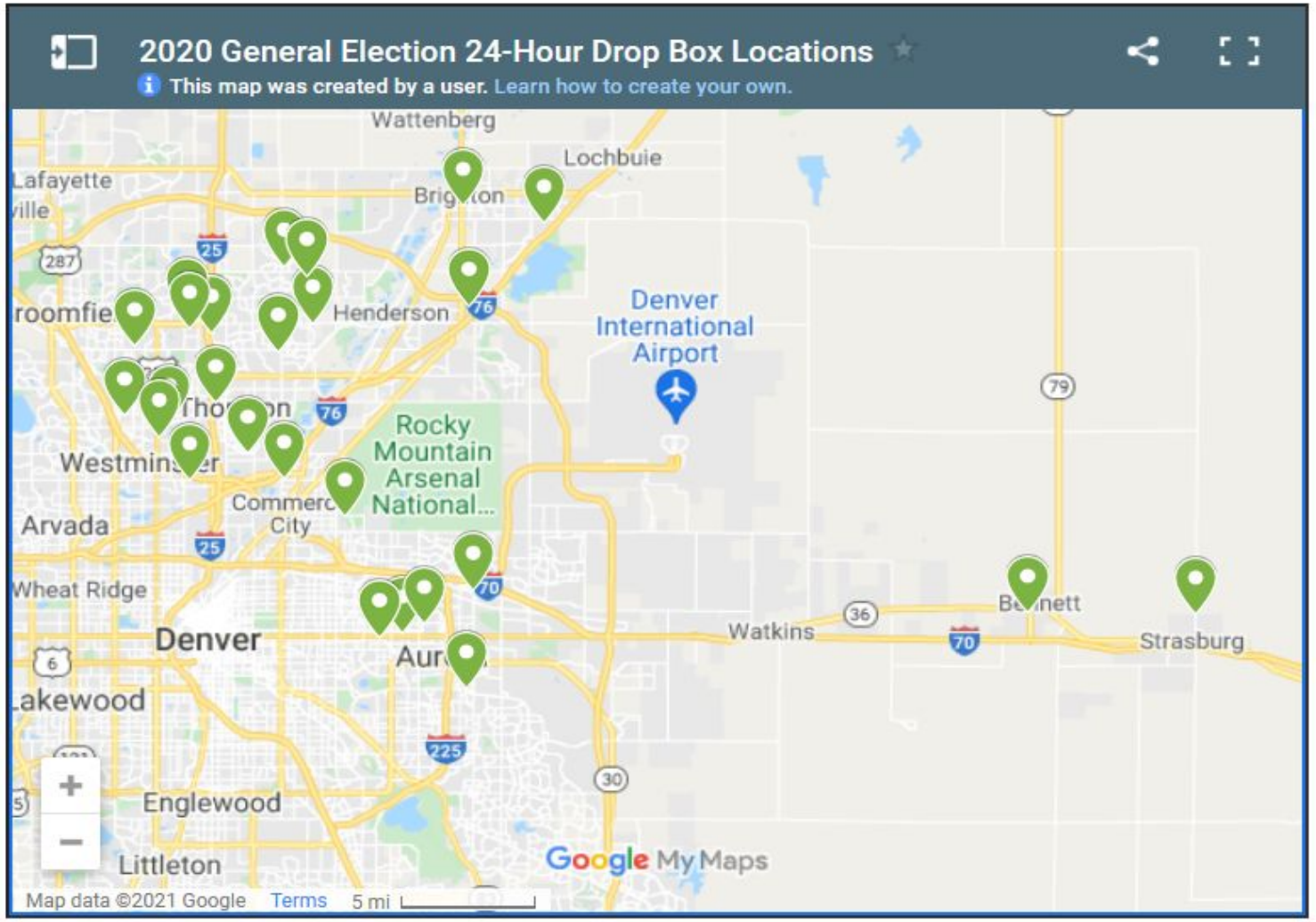
- Accuracy
- Efficiency

Source: “Voters Assigned to Wrong Districts,” Washington Post 2018

Why geo-enable elections?

Improved:

- Communication
- Transparency



Source: Adams County, CO Elections Office, 2021

Where do you start?

Convene a team of specialists

Possible partners for your team

Where can you find specialists?

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Where to look?

- State offices
- Local offices
- Private sector & consultants
- Universities or college programs

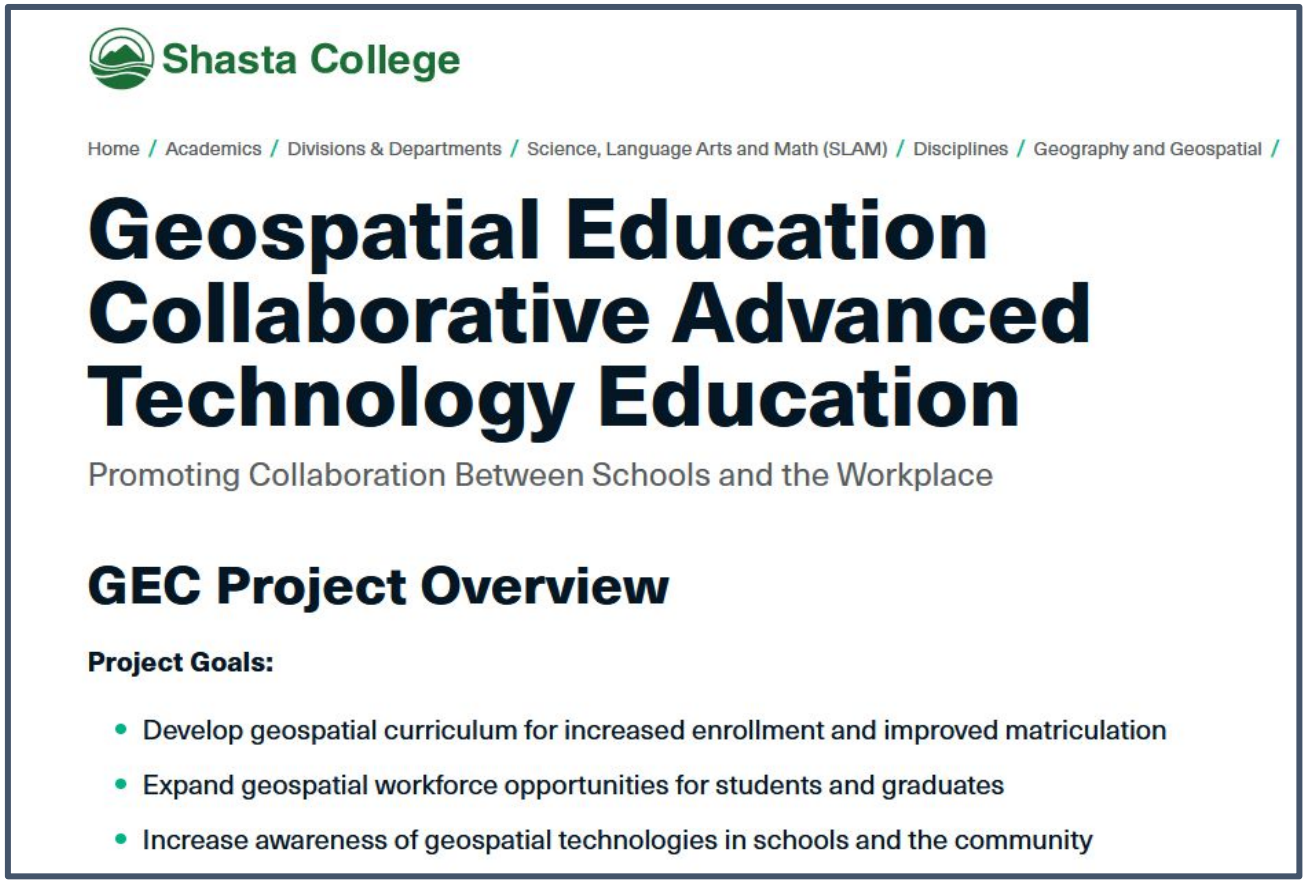
Where to look?

- State offices
  - GIS services office
  - Chief information office
  - Land department
  - Elections office
- Local offices
  - Tax assessor
  - Engineers
  - Planning & Zoning

NSGIC state representatives: https://www.nsgic.org/states
NSGIC 5 Questions to Ask Your State GIO

Where to look?

- Private sector & consultants
- Universities and college programs



Source: "Geospatial Education Collaborative Advanced Technology Education," Shasta College 2021

“Know before you go”

1. Why are we making this change?
2. What are the opportunities?
3. What are you asking them for?
4. How can this help them?

Key role in geo-enabling elections

Champion

- Promote change
- Locate and invite stakeholders
- Set expectations
- Ensure the success of the project

Speaking each other’s language

Tips for GIS professionals:

- Remember election officials = stewards of democracy
- Define GIS basics, skip the jargon
- Ask for an election calendar
- Acknowledge that election officials are the final arbiter

Speaking each other’s language

Tips for election officials:

- Remember GIS professionals = committed public servants
- Teach them about elections, skip the jargon
- Ask questions, even if basic
- Listen to their expertise

Setting expectations and considerations for your team

Convening your team

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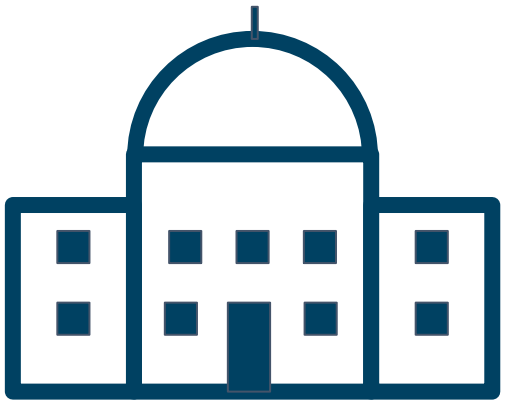
Expectations and goals

- Share assumptions
- What is everyone’s motivation?
- Commit to learning about each other’s work
- Commit to regular meetings & communication

Policy considerations

- Data considerations
  - Access control
  - Consistency standards
  - Content guidelines
  - Data sharing
- Data maintenance



Technical considerations

- Learn what platforms/software are available
- Assess platforms/softwares ability to meet your needs
- Set data update and transfer schedules

Implementation considerations

- Implementation plan:
  - Identify data sources
  - Identify data quality
  - Set address standardization goals
    - Ex. 100 S. Main St. **or** 100 South Main Street

Funding

- Software and tools may cost money
- Align your software with other offices
- Share costs and resources across offices
- Check for enterprise license agreements

2020 NSGIC Geo-Enabled Elections pilot study

Shasta County, CA

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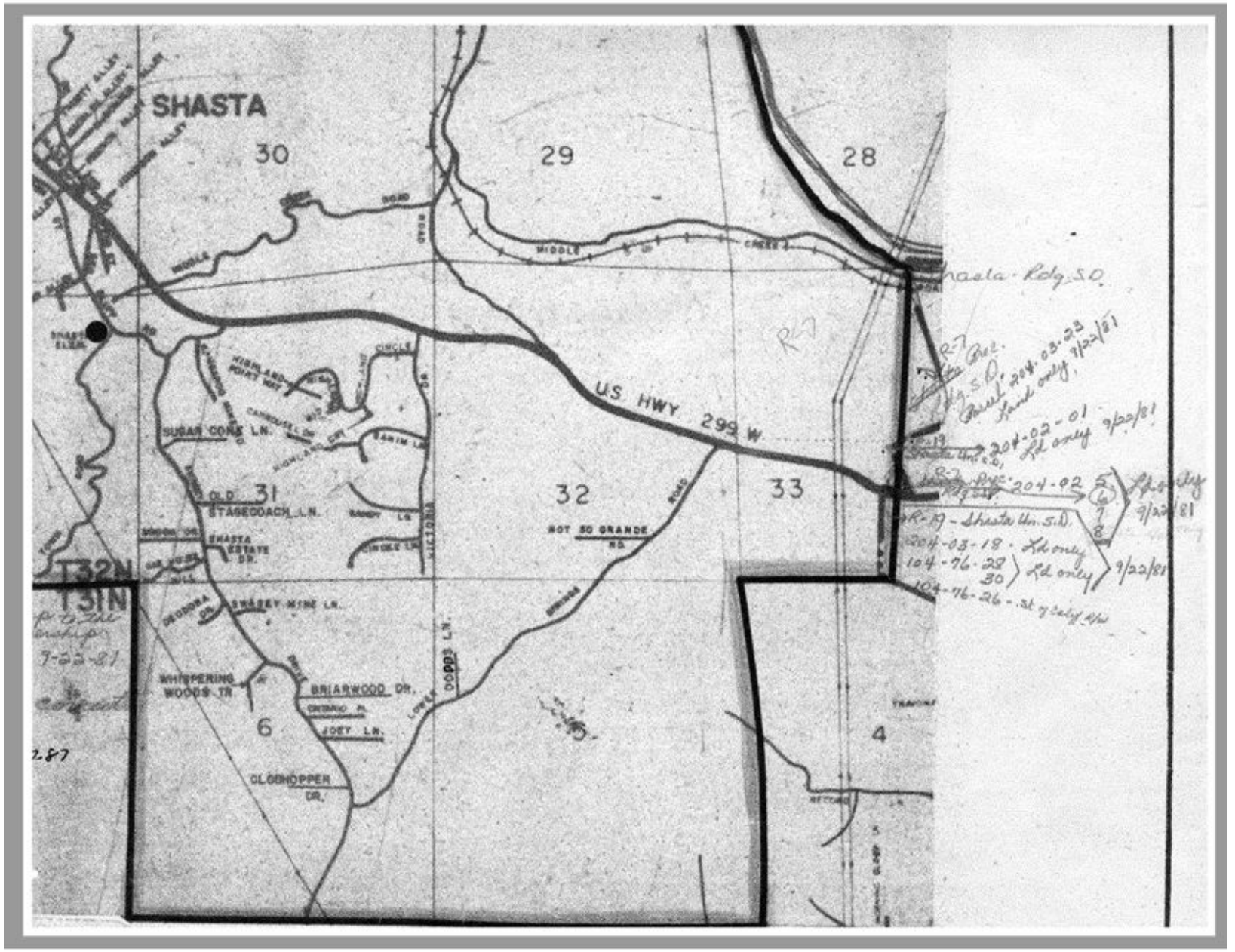
Pilot project goals

Ensure every voter gets the correct ballot

Develop a spatial and analytical quality control audit for the November 2020 election

Prepare for 2021 state and local redistricting process

Mapping in the early days



Source: Shasta County Elections 1981

From paper to GIS

- GIS and colored pencils
- Maptitude (software) - very user friendly tool that worked well for the 2011 redistricting effort
- ESRI (software) - a more mature tool

Shasta County's Team

- The County has a decentralized GIS effort
- GIS team members include:
  - County IT Dept. GIS staff
  - City of Redding GIS staff
  - Election Dept. staff
  - Other County staff
- It took a team of partners to make the pilot a success!
- IT and Community College intern work study program

NSGIC pilot benefits

- Strengthened relationships with IT staff; earned buy in and investment in election success from GIS support staff
- Provided incentive for other county GIS projects to be completed (address verification project led by a third county department)
- Created framework and accountability for both elections department and GIS support staff to get the work accomplished in preparation for Redistricting
- Our mentor: Gary Bilotta, Maricopa County, AZ Director of GIS – he’s so great!
- New motto: it’s all about version control

Pilot project goals 2021

Develop geo-spatial registration workflows for assigning voter precinct and portion

Develop annual quality control workflows for spatial and analytical audits

Apply learned Best Practices to 2021 state and local redistricting process

Let’s talk

Discussion

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Next steps

- Have a conversation with NSGIC about convening a team of specialists
- Learn more about the technical capacity needed for geo-enabled elections
- Reach out to my state's NSGIC representative
- Locate GIS expertise in peer offices or at the state
- Schedule a kick-off meeting with my new team
- Identify initial objectives for my team of specialists
- Ask an expert questions to learn more about the team of specialists
- I'm not sure

Share your thoughts

- What resonated with you from today’s webinar? (Any “ah-ha” moments?)
- What questions do you have about what we covered today?
- What questions do you have about what we didn’t cover today?

We've covered a lot

Wrapping up

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What was your experience with today’s webinar?

- Quick poll
- Please complete now to provide feedback and improve the webinar for future participants

Geo-Enabling Election Series: Up next

- Convening a team of specialists
- Collecting & sustaining a voting unit GIS layer
- Implementing a geocoding strategy
- Assembling best available contextual layers
- Defining & implementing data validation processes

techandciviclife.org/course/geo-enabled-elections/

Thanks!

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