

Consultant Report: District Analysis for the City of Fort Lauderdale

March 7, 2022

John Scott Dailey Florida Institute of Government
Florida Atlantic University

Steven Bourassa, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair, Department of Urban and Regional Planning

James Gammack-Clark, M.A., Ph.D. candidate (ABD)
Senior Instructor, Department of Geosciences

Ronald R. Schultz, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus, Department of Geosciences

Michael Stamm Jr. MURP
Adjunct Faculty, Department of Urban and Regional Planning

Introduction

The City of Fort Lauderdale contracted with Florida Atlantic University (FAU) to conduct an analysis of their City Commission election districts. The contract outlines a process that has two main components: (1) a population analysis of the current election districts and recommendation for redistricting and (2) the creation of redistricting options for the City.

This report transmits a general analysis of the 2020 U.S. Census apportionment dataset, adjusted for development that has occurred since April 1st of 2020 (Census Day) and for future growth to the year 2023, as it relates to the existing City Commission election districts. These data were used to analyze the population balance among the districts to determine whether the districts have fallen out of alignment, and, if so, to what extent.

The 2020 Census

There are two primary differences that make the 2020 U.S. Census stand out from those that preceded it: a significant delay in its release due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the implementation of a brand new 'differential privacy' policy. We will briefly address both here for clarity and context.

The decennial census aims to capture a snapshot in time of the population of the United States of America. Understanding that the population is constantly changing, with births, deaths, and migration patterns constantly adjusting the fabric of the American people, Census Day represents a single moment in time for which the U.S. population is enumerated with the greatest precision possible. This day is always April 1st. By this date, every household in America received an invitation to participate in the 2020 census, with three options to respond: online, by mail, or by phone. 2020 represented the first census to include an online response option. After this day is a period of time in which the U.S. Census Bureau follows up with non-responders and begins a quality control process. Traditionally, the Census Bureau would deliver an apportionment count to the U.S. President on December 31st, followed by a distribution of redistricting data to the states exactly one year to the day after Census Day: in this case, April 1, 2021.

However, due to complications caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Census Bureau sought statutory relief from Congress that would allow for apportionment counts to be delivered to the President by April 30, 2021, and redistricting data to be delivered to the states no later than September 30, 2021.

Additionally, the Census Bureau compressed the typical three-month nonresponse follow up enumeration period to two and half months. Ultimately, redistricting data was released in a 'legacy format' on August 12, 2021. This delay inevitably and unavoidably complicated redistricting efforts for every electoral district in the nation. It also meant that the amount of error in the data, inherent to every census, would likely be greater in the 2020 census. The Census Bureau has since confirmed that the rate of missing information was higher in the 2020 census than in the 2010 census. However, they have also stated that this rate was lower than they initially feared.

The 2020 redistricting data is also the first to employ 'differential privacy protection'. This represents the Census Bureau's introduction of 'noise' into the data at the more local geographic scale (Blocks and Block Groups) with the intent to strike a balance between data protection and precision. The effect is that while the enumeration counts can be trusted at the Census Tract level, we must anticipate a certain degree of 'fuzziness' at the Block level. Specifically, while the aggregate count of population for a Census Tract will be accurate, a certain proportion of people/housing units will have been deliberately misallocated by the Census Bureau at the Block level. While this may not be problematic in the realignment of Congressional Districts, for example, it certainly represents a challenge for Municipal Districts, for which the geographic precision of Census Blocks is highly desirable.

Taken together, therefore, the complications related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the implementation of 'differential privacy' introduce a certain amount of additional uncertainty to the primary source of data for this analysis (2020 Census Redistricting Data (PL 94-171)) that is unprecedented. Nevertheless, this data remains the basis upon which municipal redistricting efforts begin across the nation.

Current Districts

An Evaluation of Future Growth:

To ensure that our recommended alternatives for redistricting reflect the most up-to-date information about population growth, they are based on projections to 2023. City staff identified developments that were not included or only partially included in the April 1, 2020 Census counts but are now occupied or expected to be constructed and occupied by 2023. These included a mixture of multi-family and single-family homes. Population projections were established for these projects by multiplying the number of units by the Persons Per Household (PPH) value established by the U.S. Census for the City of Fort

Table 1 – City of Fort Lauderdale Population Estimates for Developments Completed Since April 1st, 2020/Scheduled for Completion by January 2023

Subdivision	Units	Population Estimate	Current District
100 Las Olas	113	268	4
1224 NE 15th Townhouses	5	12	2
309 Hendricks Isle	5	12	2
501Seventeen	243	576	4
912 Victoria	11	26	2
Acacia at Progresso Village	20	47	2
Alluvion Las Olas	379	898	4
Apache Lofts	33	78	2
AquaBlu	35	83	1
Art Lofts	9	21	2
Belmont Village	204	204	1
Cluster 821	3	7	4
Croissant Park II	7	17	4
Davie 1	48	114	3
Four Seasons	328	777	2
Gardenia Park	46	109	2
Genco Cluster	2	5	2
Holden Senior Living	211	231	2
Los Patios	3	7	2
Millennium Townhomes	7	17	1
Next Las Olas	374	886	4
Novo Las Olas	341	808	4
One Financial Plaza Phase III	300	711	4
Palm Air Preserve	22	52	1
Pearl-Riverland	276	654	3
Permit level projects	315	722	ALL
RD Las Olas	311	737	4
Regatta	230	545	4
Residences of Las Olas	419	993	4
Riverwalk Residences of Las Olas	296	702	4
Sailboat Bend	215	510	4
Seven on Seventh	72	171	2
Six13	140	332	2
Society Las Olas	639	1,514	4
Suncrest Court - Blocks 1-4	116	275	3
The Terraces (527 Orton)	18	43	2
Townhomes at River Gardens	29	69	3
Victoria Park at 12	16	38	2
X Las Olas (Society Las Olas Phase II)	1214	2,877	4
	7,055	16,148	

Lauderdale (based on 2015-2019 American Community Survey data): 2.37 (with the result rounded to the nearest whole number). Additionally, two Assisted Living Facilities were identified. In their case, the anticipated population of both developments was provided. A summary of these units and their population projections are listed in **Table 1** above. (Note: In the case of the permit level projects, population projections were made at the census block level. Rounding error will thus produce a slight discrepancy in the population column if the reader attempts to multiply the total units for all of these projects by the PPH value, rather than summing the projected population for each block, as was done in this case.) In total, 16,148 people will be added to the city's total population count, with the majority (12,278) being allotted to District 4, and much of the remainder added to Districts 2 and 3. The relative lack of development in District 1 suggests that it is likely to be falling behind in its share of the city's population, and that it may have to expand in order to compensate.

An Evaluation of the Existing Districts:

Accounting for this anticipated growth, the 2023 projected population for the City of Fort Lauderdale will be 198,908. Dividing by four puts the projected average population for each district at 49,727. The **Existing Districts Map** and **Table 2** show the geographic boundaries and projected population counts for the current districts. The district with the greatest projected population is District 4 with 60,364 residents; the district with the smallest projected population is District 1 with 42,614 residents. District 2, with a projected population of 50,103, is closest to the ideal district size.

The data show that the current districts are heavily unbalanced and that the deviation is sufficient to warrant redistricting. District 4 will account for the greatest portion of the city's population at 30.35%. This deviates from the theoretical average population of 49,727 by 21.39%. District 1, the smallest district, will have 21.42% of the city population and deviate from the average by -14.3%. This represents a difference of 17,750 people between the two districts, and a spread of **35.69%** (14.3% + 21.39%). The sum deviation of all districts is **44.29%**, with a mean deviation of **11.07%**. As such, the current population imbalance exceeds the standard criterion for redistricting: there must be no more than a 10% deviation between districts.

***Table 2 – Current Council Districts – City of Fort Lauderdale
 2020 Enumeration and 2023 Population Projection***

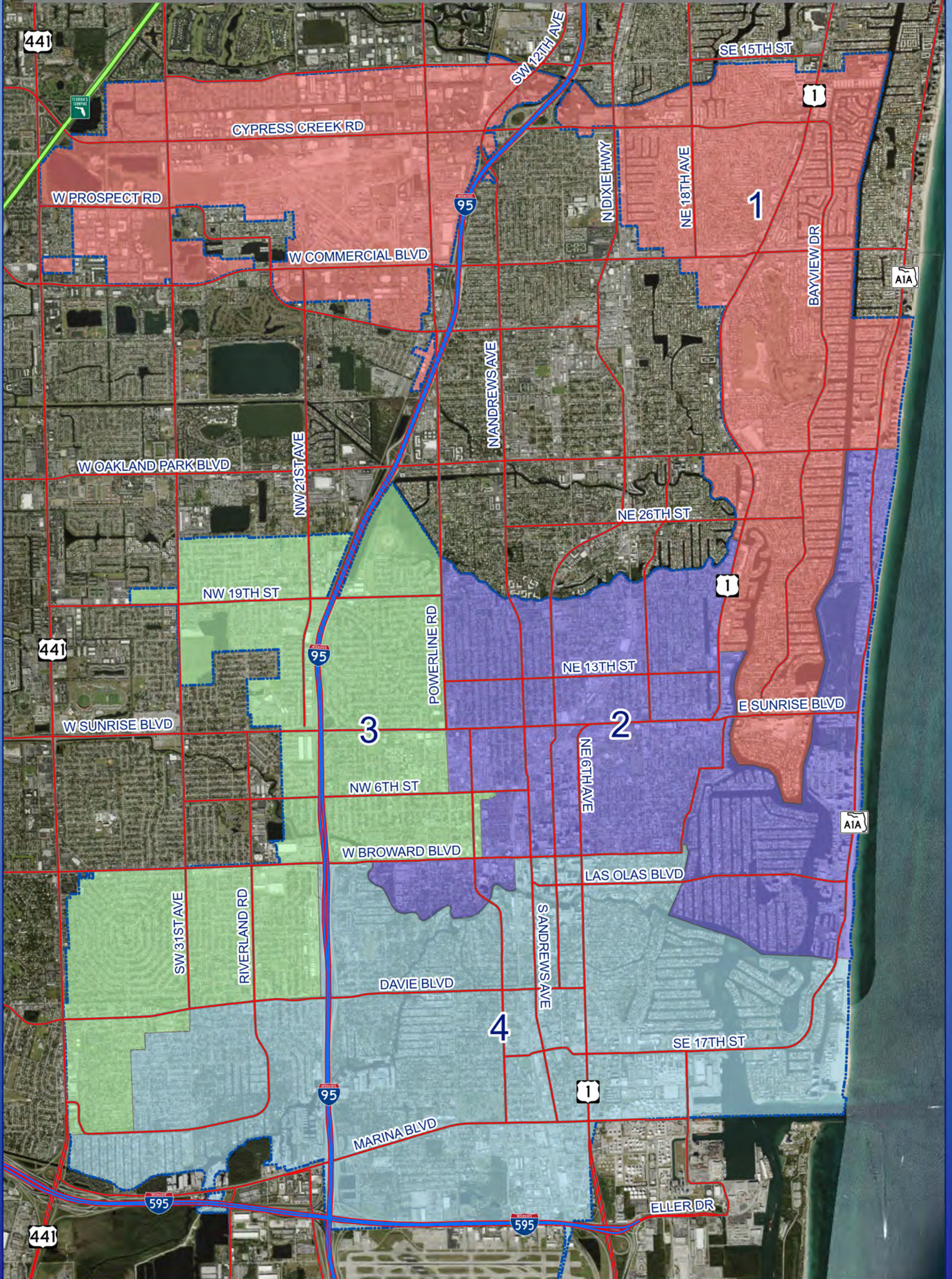
Current Districts	2020 Population	% of City	Deviation From Average	2023 Population Projection	% of City	Deviation From Average
District 1	42,148	23.06	-7.75%	42,614	21.42	-14.30%
District 2	47,921	26.22	4.88%	50,103	25.19	0.76%
District 3	44,605	24.41	-2.37%	45,827	23.04	-7.84%
District 4	48,086	26.31	5.24%	60,364	30.35	21.39%
Total	182,760	100	20.25%	198,908	100	44.29%
Average	45,690	25	5.06%	49,727	25	11.07%

The data also reveals interesting trends. As a product of the city’s rapid growth, since 2020 (at which time the population balance was already out of alignment) the mean deviation has more than doubled (5.06% to 11.07%), while the spread has almost tripled (12.99% to 35.69%). District 4 has gained in its relative share of population at the expense of the others, where District 2 has fallen near to the average, Districts 1 and 3 have fallen well below it. Should this trend of rapid growth continue, the city may not want to wait for the next decennial census before engaging in another redistricting effort.

The overall pattern of district boundary changes would need to increase the population of Districts 1 and 3, while reducing that of District 4. This will, of course, necessitate an adjustment of their geographic boundaries where Districts 1 and 3 gain territory, while District 4 must contract in size. Due to the unique geography of the city, any expansion of District 1 will have to occur at its southern border with District 2. This will lead to a domino effect where District 2 will have to gain territory from Districts 3 and/or 4. Additionally, where possible, improvements in population balance, compactness, and contiguity will be sought for each of the districts.

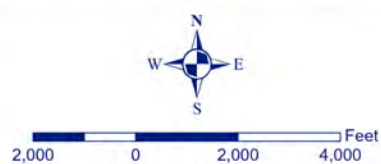
City of Fort Lauderdale

Existing Commission Districts



Revision Date: 3/6/2022
Contact: James Gammack-Clark
Filename: Fort_Lauderdale.aprx
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau
City of Fort Lauderdale
Florida Atlantic University

- District 1
- District 2
- District 3
- District 4



City of Fort Lauderdale

100 North Andrews Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301
Tel. (954) 828-5003/5004



Redistricting Criteria and Data Sources

To conduct the City's redistricting process, the consultant will abide by the following standards by which rational districts are developed nationwide and which are supported by case law and practice throughout the nation. These criteria can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Reasonable population equality across districts:
 - Districts should have approximately the same number of people when all persons, regardless of age, are counted. Ideal district size is based on the total population divided by the number of districts.
 - Redistricting should adhere to Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended and interpreted through case law. This criterion requires that minority population clusters be respected in the development of district boundaries. Arbitrary dilution and other discriminatory practices are prohibited.
 - Redistricting should adhere to Florida's Fair Districting Amendment.
 - Although deviations should be avoided wherever possible, there must be no more than a 10% overall deviation from the ideal size across districts.
- 2) Geographic contiguity and appropriate compactness:
 - Major natural and manmade boundaries should be followed to the extent possible in defining boundaries of voting districts.
 - The integrity of communities of interest should be maintained based on race, life cycle/age, income, and other community identity characteristics such as subdivisions.
 - The degree of change in pre-existing patterns of districts should be minimized, to promote continuity of citizen identification with a district.
 - District compactness and spatial contiguity should be maintained. A compact shape for each district will be sought in each redistricting option presented to the city.

The first criterion is of primary importance; the second is significant in guiding decisions in reaching reasonable population balance.

These criteria are consistent with the City of Fort Lauderdale's charter:

“Not later than April 1, 1987 the city commission shall, by ordinance, adopt, create and establish four (4) separate and distinct geographical commission districts. Except as is provided herein for noncontiguous parcels, the four (4) districts to be created and established by the city commission shall be of contiguous territory and as approximately equal in population as is practicable. If there are parcels of land which are within the corporate limits of and which are part of the City of Fort Lauderdale, but which parcels are not contiguous to any other parcel or tract of land which is within the corporate limits of the City of Fort Lauderdale, then such noncontiguous parcel(s) shall either be made part of one (1) of the districts to be created as provided for herein or if such parcel(s) has a population approximately equal to the other commission districts to be created, then such parcel(s) may be a commission district. In creating and establishing the four (4) city commission districts, the city commission shall use the most recent United States Census data to determine population figures. After the receipt of the published information of each decennial census, the city commission shall reestablish the boundaries of the four (4) commission districts so that the districts shall be as approximately equal in population as is practicable.”

In developing revised Fort Lauderdale City Commission election districts, the spatial units used in composing or building the districts are residential housing subdivisions (communities) and U.S. Census blocks. Subdivisions are typically homogeneous in their housing characteristics and thus serve households with broadly similar interests. Therefore, district borders are typically subdivision boundaries and associated major roadways or other obvious physical features. U.S. Census blocks are typically subunits in subdivisions and are the smallest spatial unit used in tabulating Census data.

Recommendation

It is the opinion of the FAU redistricting team that a realignment of City Commission election district boundaries, to better balance their population, is required. The overall pattern of district boundary changes will need to increase the population of Districts 1 and 3, while decreasing the population of District 4, to achieve the desired population equity between districts. This will, of course, necessitate an adjustment of the geographic boundaries where Districts 1 and 3 must expand in size, while District 4 must contract. Where possible, improved population balance, compactness, and contiguity will be sought for each of the Districts.

The FAU team will provide the City's Commission with redistricting map alternatives for their consideration, consistent with the terms of the agreement between FAU and the City.

Appendix

District Demographics

The table below depicts the projected demographics taken from the 2020 U.S. Census for the existing Council districts. Note that the columns 'White' through 'Other' sum to the City's population total. These categories represent the U.S. Census' definition of race. The last two columns ('Hispanic or Latino' and 'Not Hispanic or Latino') also sum to the City's population total (the U.S. Census' classification of ethnicity).

*Current Commission Districts – City of Fort Lauderdale
 Expanded Demographics, U.S. Census 2020*

District (Existing)	Total Population	White	Black or African American	American Indian and Alaska Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	Other	Hispanic or Latino	Not Hispanic or Latino
1	42,148	30,992 (73.53%)	2,371 (5.63%)	102 (0.24%)	1,035 (2.46%)	24 (0.06%)	7,624 (18.09%)	7,749 (18.39%)	34,399 (81.61%)
2	47,921	28,919 (60.35%)	10,069 (21.01%)	156 (0.33%)	1,104 (2.3%)	21 (0.04%)	7,652 (15.97%)	7,884 (16.45%)	40,037 (83.55%)
3	44,605	4,237 (9.5%)	33,472 (75.04%)	176 (0.39%)	252 (0.56%)	11 (0.02%)	6,457 (14.48%)	7,196 (16.13%)	37,409 (83.87%)
4	48,086	30,544 (63.52%)	4,597 (9.56%)	161 (0.33%)	1,249 (2.6%)	32 (0.07%)	11,503 (23.92%)	12,347 (25.68%)	35,739 (74.32%)
	182,760	94,692 (51.81%)	50,509 (27.64%)	595 (0.33%)	3,640 (1.99%)	88 (0.05%)	33,236 (18.19%)	35,176 (19.25%)	147,584 (80.75%)