

**CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND**  
**CITY ELECTION, NOVEMBER 8, 2022**  
**ELECTION REPORT**

*Submitted to the City Council, February 22, 2023*



**TAKOMA PARK BOARD OF ELECTIONS**

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## **SUMMARY**

This report has been prepared by the Takoma Park Board of Elections (hereinafter referred to as “BOE” or “the Board”) to provide the City Council and the public with the results of the 2022 Takoma Park City Elections (“the Election”). The 2022 election was the second time that the City of Takoma Park held an “all mail-in” election. It was also the second time that the City election occurred during the same even-year cycle as the state and federal elections. Before 2020, the Takoma Park election was in-person and occurred on odd-numbered years.

The 2022 Takoma Park election continued to see the trend of increased turnout for the City, reaching 49%. While the turnout was slightly down relative to the 2020 turnout of 53.7%, this small discrepancy can likely be attributed to the increased level of voter interest in 2020 due to it being a Presidential election cycle. In contrast, the 2017 turnout was only 22.1%.

Like the 2020 election, the City mailed ballots to every active registered voter in the city. Prior to Election Day, the Takoma Park Community Center was open to the public and was regularly staffed by City employees who were able to help voters with missing or spoiled ballots and any other elections-related issues. Election workers also staffed an election email address prior to Election Day to answer any ballot or election-related questions from voters.

On Election Day, the City and Board held an in-person election, which also provided voters the option of same-day registration, and the ability to ask questions about their ballots or use accessible voting tools, receive a replacement ballot should they have lost or not received their ballot in the mail, and resolve other issues.

The Board provided transparency as much as possible and was diligent in managing all ballots received. For the first time, the City provided ballot tracking services to voters, which allowed voters to see where their ballots were in the mail delivery process. City communications staff worked with the Board to conduct ongoing campaigns within City media to publicize the election and the new changes.

## **ELECTION RESULTS**

As set forth by Section 606 of the Takoma Park Municipal Charter, a candidate must receive a majority of valid votes in order to be elected. Takoma Park’s ranked choice voting offers voters the opportunity to rank candidates by order of choice, including write-ins. If no single candidate receives a majority of votes in a specific contest, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated. Voters’ second choices from the eliminated candidate are then distributed to the remaining candidates. This process is repeated until a candidate receives a majority. Detailed results are available in Annex A, the full list of write-ins is provided as Annex B.

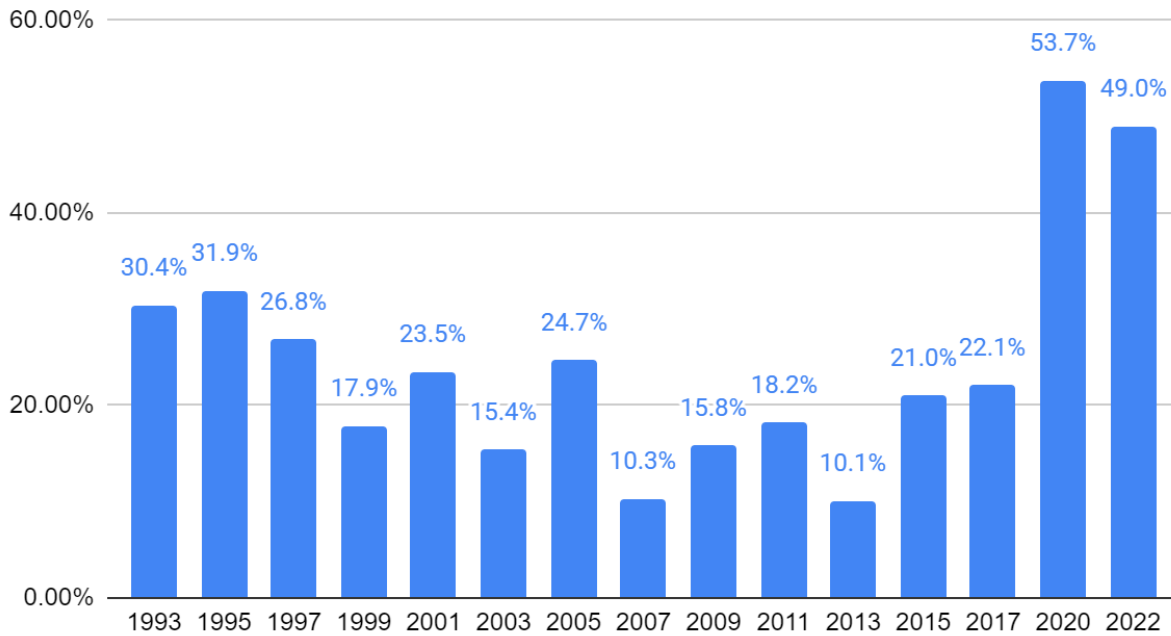
## **VOTER TURNOUT**

In 2022, the Board recorded the receipt of 5,844 ballots through mail voting and in-person voting. Of the 5,844 ballots that were received, 5,756 of those ballots were accepted and tabulated for the count (88 ballots were rejected for various reasons, as described later in the report). At the time of the 2022 election, Takoma Park had 11,743 registered voters. The final 2022 turnout figure is 49.02% of registered voters. The 2022 turnout figure nearly approximated the 2020 turnout figure, 53.7%, despite the 2022 election occurring during the midterm when higher profile races, such as the presidential election, were not on the ballot. The 2022 turnout appears to continue the trend of higher turnouts,

likely as a result of mail-in voting and the municipal election occurring at the same time as the state and federal elections.

Of the 5,756 ballots that were received and accepted by the City, 2,771 were received through mail-in voting before Election Day; 734 ballots were cast in-person on Election Day, and the remaining 2,251 ballots were received through the dropboxes or mail service on or after Election Day but before the deadline of the final certification, which was noon on Wednesday, November 16th.

## Election Turnout Percentage, by Year



**Table 1: Estimated Turnout by Ward**

<i>Ward</i>	<i>Percent Turnout</i>
Ward 1	54.92%
Ward 2	50.92%
Ward 3	52.98%
Ward 4	31.66%
Ward 5	30.36%
Ward 6	34.12%

## **VOTE BY MAIL ADMINISTRATION**

After the apparent success of the 2020 elections, the Board recommended that the City continue with the mail-in election system. All registered and active voters in the City were mailed a ballot prior to Election Day. This type of format is often called a “vote-by-mail” election, even though there are options for in-person voting.

The City contracted with four vendors for election-related services: Fort Orange Press, which provided printing and mailing services; KnowInk, which provided pollbook and software services; IVS, LLC, which provided voter accessibility devices and tabulation hardware and software; and BallotTrax, which provided mail ballot tracking to voters.

Prior to the mailing of ballots, the Board reviewed ballot design, envelope design, and developed procedures for managing the incoming ballots.

### ***Mailing ballots***

A critical component of a mail election is the voter register, since only those listed on the register as “active” voters would receive a ballot at their listed address. Inactive voters were not automatically mailed a ballot. Montgomery County maintains the voter register for the bulk of Takoma Park residents, while the City maintains a small list of residents who choose not to register with Montgomery County for state and federal elections but are otherwise registered to vote in the City election. The City Clerk received an initial register of voters from the County, which was used for the mailing of ballots to voters. After that first mailing, the City Clerk and her staff worked to mail a small number of additional ballots to registered voters who did not receive their ballots or who registered to vote after the first mailing. Any unregistered voters who wished to vote in the City after this point could come to the community center and register with the City and receive a ballot in-person. The Board and City staff were available to address any issues as they came up through the elections email address, City phone number, and in-person at the Community Center. As a result, election staff were able to provide new ballots to voters who had not received them or fix other errors in the mailing process as voters contacted the City.

### ***Receiving Ballots***

Ballots were received through the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) or at two drop box locations, one at the Community Center and one at the New Hampshire Avenue Recreation Center. City staff and BOE members regularly went to the Takoma Park Post Office and the drop boxes to pick up new ballots. Election workers used dual-signed transport logs, security tape and seals to ensure that ballots were not tampered with during transport back to the community center. At the Community Center, ballots were stored in a secure room with limited access. All mail had the official election logo on the envelope to facilitate identification of the envelopes and prompt processing by USPS. The City paid for any return postage, and thus the high usage of the drop boxes helped to reduce City election costs while also avoiding any complications that might arise at the Post Office. For the sake of transparency, all key ballot handling steps were performed in the Auditorium of the Takoma Park Community Center, which was publicly accessible, and only at times that were published to the public by the City Clerk.

In some cases, City ballots were placed in the drop boxes for Montgomery County or accidentally mailed to the County. The City also received ballots intended for Montgomery County. The City discussed this possibility with the county and were able to exchange envelopes sent to the wrong location. The Board only accepted ballots for seven days following Election Day, as long as they were postmarked by Election Day.

### ***Ballot Processing and Counting***

Learning from the experiences of 2020, the Board adapted and modified its ballot processing system to improve efficiency and lower the amount of work hours required while still maintaining the highest level of ballot integrity. All steps involving ballot-handling, counting, batching, and processing were performed by at least two election workers. Immediately upon receipt of new ballots either through the mail service or the drop boxes, those new ballots were counted and bundled into batches. These ballots were double-counted by at least two election workers. The number of ballots, the date of the receipt, and the location of the pickup were all logged. These batches were securely stored until they went through the *intake* process. The entirety of the *intake* process occurred in the Auditorium of the Takoma Park Community Center, which was open and available to the public for viewing, and during working business hours which were posted ahead of time by the City Clerk.

At intake, groups of two election workers operated as a team and were supervised by an election judge. The election judge kept daily logs of how many ballots were removed from the secured storage location and brought to the Auditorium for intake.

During intake, each group would be assigned a poll pad scanner and a bundle of ballots. The election worker group would remove the oath envelope from the mailing envelope, scan the barcode on the oath envelope, and ensure that the oath envelope was signed and that the signature matched the name that populated on the poll pad when it was scanned in. Both election workers would verify the signature match. If there did not appear to be any issues (such as a missing oath envelope, a missing ballot, a signature mismatch, a damaged oath envelope, etc.), the election workers carefully removed the ballot, being extra cautious not to look at the ballot itself by removing the ballot face down on the table. The election workers would verify that the ward number was correct by gently folding over the corner of the ballot to determine the ward number and compare it to the number populated on the pollbook. If that was correct, the election workers would process the voter on the poll pad, sign the voter confirmation receipt that was printed by the poll pad, and place the ballot into a box designated for de-identified ballots that successfully went through the intake process. The election workers also put the mailing and oath envelopes into a specific container, as well as the voter confirmation receipts.

For any ballots that had any issues, an election judge was called over to review. If the election judge could not resolve the issue, then that ballot and its envelopes were put back together and set aside so that City staff and Board members could attempt to resolve the issue at a later date.

At the end of each bundle of ballots, the election workers coordinated with the election judge to make sure that the following three numbers were all the same: the number of voter check-in confirmations on their poll pad, the number of de-identified ballots that were in the designated bin, and the number of voter confirmation receipts. During the entire 2022 election, there were ultimately no discrepancies between any of these numbers.

For ballots with any issues, City staff and the Board attempted to contact voters who needed to cure their ballots. These voters could come to the Community Center and cure the errors - such as adding their signature to the oath envelope.

Once a ballot became de-identified, it was considered accepted. At the end of this process, the de-identified ballots were carefully counted and bundled together. The count and the date of the intake were logged and the ballots were again safely secured until ready for *canvassing*.

Following intake, election workers undertook the *canvass*, in which de-identified ballots were quickly reviewed for any mechanical issues that may cause issues during the scanning step. During the canvass, election workers checked to make sure that no ballots were torn, that there were no markings that would identify the voter (as the Board is precluded from counting such ballots per the Takoma Park code). If any ballot was discovered that may have issues that would prevent it from scanning, an election judge worked with a second election judge to duplicate the ballot. This process would only occur if there was unanimity between the judges that the intention of the voter was clear and unambiguous and that the judges could precisely and accurately replicate those intentions. The originals were kept and stored. Both the original and duplicated ballots were marked on the back of the ballots to indicate that they went through this process, and the election judges carefully logged each time this occurred. After the *canvass* step, the ballots were ready for *scanning*.

During *scanning*, the Board sent all ballots through the scanning machine to record the votes cast. Even though a ballot was scanned in the scanning machine, it was not tabulated. Instead, the machine simply saved an image of that ballot. Per the Takoma Park code, tabulation is not allowed until the closing of the polls on Election Day. Finally, in *tabulation*, computer software tabulated the results from all ballots scanned. The Board tabulated the results using two different software packages, one from the vendor, and one open source equivalent, and received the same outcomes.

### ***Rejected Ballots***

Of the 5,844 ballots that were received by the City, the Board ultimately rejected 88 ballots (1.5% rejection rate), per Section 5.18.090(c) of the Takoma Park Code (requiring the rejection of ballots under certain conditions). Like any election in any jurisdiction, many ballot issues arose during the 2022 cycle. These issues included:

- The oath envelope was unsigned but ballot was sealed inside of it;
- The oath envelope had a mismatched signature;
- The oath envelope had a mismatched signature but had been paired with another oath envelope with the other name (usually happens when a pair of spouses sign each other's oath envelopes);
- The oath envelope was signed but unsealed and the ballot was not in the oath envelope;
- The oath envelope had an indistinguishable or unreadable signature and no printed name;
- The voter voted with the wrong ward ballot (in this case, a vote for the Mayor's contest could be counted);
- The ballot had a distinguishing mark;
- The ballot was incorrectly marked and voter intent was unclear;
- The voter's mail-in ballot was received and accepted but the voter claimed not to have received their mail-in ballot and voted a provisional ballot on Election Day;

Throughout the election process, the Board and City staff made every reasonable effort to ensure that all legal ballots were counted. These efforts included direct contact with voters, dropping off individual ballot packets with voters, and directly calling or emailing with voters if there were signature issues. During this process, the Board and City staff were able to cure 100s of ballots, though the exact number of cured ballots was not tracked.

Of the 88 rejected ballots:

- 32 had no envelope and/or no signature;
- 2 were empty oath envelopes with no ballots inside;
- 11 were ballots that were received by the City but were already de-identified, they had no oath envelope or any associated voter information;

- 31 were late arrivals, which the City received after Election Day, including ballots that had postmarks stamped with dates that were after Election Day;
- 12 ballots were rejected for other reasons, such as ballots that showed improper voter assistance, ballots where it was clear that the voter permanently moved outside the city limits of Takoma Park.

### **ELECTION DAY ADMINISTRATION**

In 2022, there were 734 voters that cast ballots in-person on Election Day. In comparison, 1,654 ballots were cast in-person on Election Day in 2017, and 149 ballots were cast in-person in 2020. Voters could also drop off their mail ballots at both the Community Center and Recreation Center on Election Day until 8:00pm. The 2022 Election Day voting was conducted inside the Takoma Park Community Center, with a rotating staff of about 12 individuals.

### **COMMUNICATIONS**

The Board focused on providing ongoing communication to voters regarding the new voting procedures. City communications staff attended almost all Board meetings in the four months prior to Election Day to provide updates on voter outreach. In most years, the Board would conduct a mix of in-person outreach, digital, and mail messaging. However, in 2022 the primary communication method was through digital and print. The City included election updates in the monthly newsletter, the City Guide, on the City website, and on City social media accounts. In addition, the City Clerk sent a pre-election postcard to all residents with information about the election and then a one-page brief to all residents before they received their ballots. These materials were typically in English and Spanish with other languages available if requested. The combined outreach effort of the City communications team may have helped boost turnout this cycle. For the first time, there was also a specific election email address to answer voter questions. Previously all inquiries were directed to the City Clerk. Outside of the official BOE messaging, the candidates and other local media, message boards, and online groups were an important source of information for voters on the dates, locations, and procedures for the election.

### **ELECTION RESOURCES AND COSTS**

The Board notes that the large number of ballots returned in drop off boxes, rather than mailed back to the City, saved the City thousands of dollars in return postage.

The labor costs provided below substantially understate the actual amount of time from City staff and others who volunteered their time for this election.

The direct cost for the election was \$64,496.



**TABLE 4: SUMMARY OF 2022 ELECTION COSTS**

<b>PRINTING AND MAILING OF ELECTION NOTICES AND BALLOTS (FORT ORANGE PRESS)</b>	\$21,974.83
<b>SCANNERS, TABULATOR, AND BALLOT MARKING DEVICES (IVS, LLC)</b>	\$12,850.00
<b>BALLOT TRACKING (BALLOTTRAX)</b>	\$1,000.00
<b>POLL PADS AND SERVICE (KNOWINK, LLC)</b>	\$9,840.00
<b>POSTAGE AND PO BOX</b>	\$15,393.09
<b>ELECTION SIGNS</b>	\$258.96
<b>SUPPLIES</b>	\$657.44
<b>TRANSLATION</b>	\$52.88
<b>MISCELLANEOUS (FOOD, MILEAGE, SHIPPING COSTS)</b>	\$557.79
	\$64,496.30

## ANNEX A: FINAL 2022 RESULTS TABLES

<b>Ward 1</b>			
<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>Percent of Votes</i>	<i>Status</i>
<b>Fulcher</b>	<b>792</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>Elected</b>
<i>Sherman</i>	274	20%	
<i>Wallace</i>	288	21%	
<i>Write-in</i>	10	1%	
<i>Total Valid Votes</i>	1,364		
<i>Winning Threshold</i>	683		

<b>Ward 2</b>			
<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>Percent of Votes</i>	<i>Status</i>
<b>Dyballa</b>	<b>1,010</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>Elected</b>
<i>Write-in</i>	62	6%	
<i>Total Valid Votes</i>	1,072		
<i>Winning Threshold</i>	537		

**Ward 3 - Round 1 of 2**

<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>Percent of Votes</i>	<i>Transfer</i>
<i>Diez</i>	485	35%	+137
<i>Gibson</i>	601	44%	+125
<i>Hadden</i>	285	21%	-285
<i>Write-in</i>	2	-	-1
<i>Total Valid Votes</i>	1,373		
<i>Ballots Exhausted*</i>			24
<i>Winning Threshold By Round</i>	687		

**Ward 3 - Round 2 of 2**

<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>Percent of Votes</i>	<i>Status</i>
<i>Diez</i>	622	46%	
<b><i>Gibson</i></b>	<b>726</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>Elected</b>
<i>Total Valid Votes</i>	1,348		
<i>Winning Threshold By Round</i>	675		

\* A candidate must receive a majority of valid votes to be elected. If no candidate reaches a majority of first choice votes, an instant runoff is triggered. The ballots marked first choice for candidate(s) with the fewest first choice votes are reviewed to see if they selected a second choice. If so, those ballots are redistributed to their second choice candidate. If their second choice is defeated or if they did not select a second choice, those ballots are declared “exhausted.”

**Ward 4**

<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>Percent of Votes</i>	<i>Status</i>
<b>Seamens</b>	<b>559</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>Elected</b>
<i>Write-in</i>	17	3%	
<i>Total Valid Votes</i>	576		
<i>Winning Threshold</i>	289		

**Ward 5 - Round 1 of 2**

<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>Percent of Votes</i>	<i>Transfer</i>
<i>Campbell</i>	159	33%	+28
<i>Honzak</i>	236	48%	+29
<i>Tebabu</i>	92	19%	-92
<i>Write-in</i>		-	+1
<i>Total Valid Votes</i>	487		
<i>Ballots Exhausted</i>			34
<i>Winning Threshold by Round</i>	244		

**Ward 5 - Round 2 of 2**

<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>Percent of Votes</i>	<i>Status</i>
<i>Campbell</i>	187	41%	
<b>Honzak</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>Elected</b>
<i>Write-in</i>	1	0%	
<i>Total Valid Votes</i>	453		
<i>Winning Threshold by Round</i>	227		

**Ward 6 - Round 1 of 2**

<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>Percent of Votes</i>	<i>Transfer</i>
<i>Agosse</i>	100	15%	-100
<i>Charles</i>	57	9%	-57
<i>Moore</i>	222	34%	+72
<i>Small</i>	268	41%	+45
<i>Write-in</i>	5	1%	-5
<i>Total Valid Votes</i>	652		
<i>Ballots Exhausted</i>			45
<i>Winning Threshold by Round</i>	327		

**Ward 6 - Round 2 of 2**

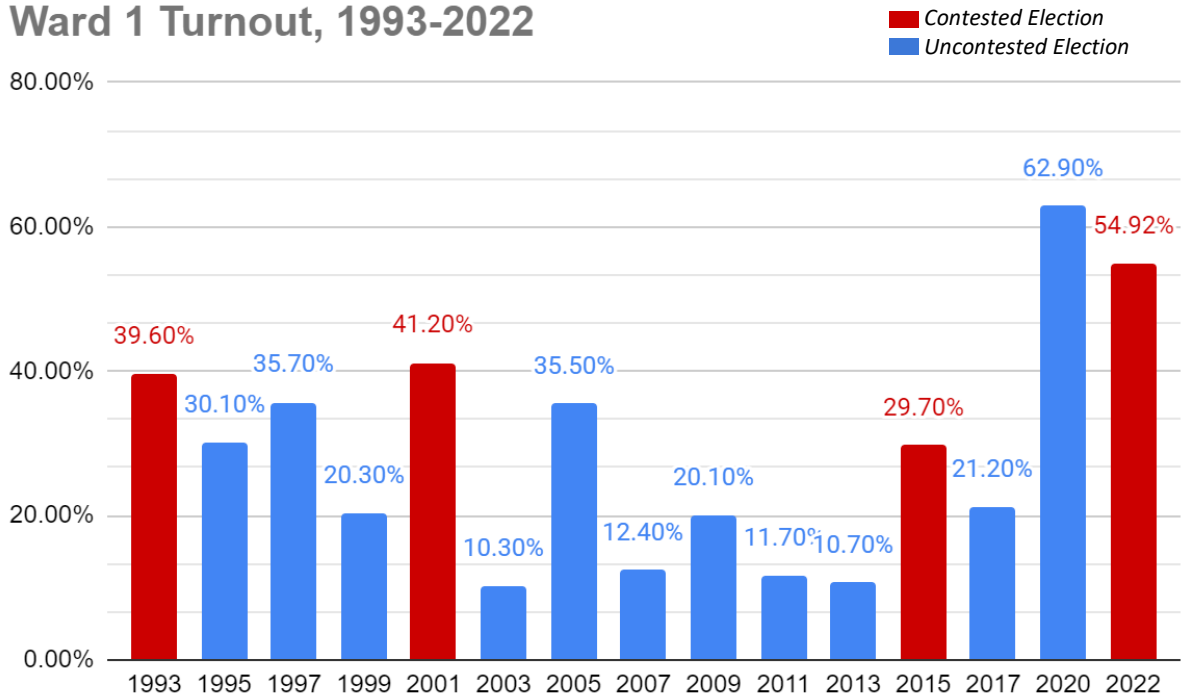
<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>Percent of Votes</i>	<i>Status</i>
<i>Moore</i>	294	48%	
<b><i>Small</i></b>	<b>313</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>Elected</b>
<i>Total Valid Votes</i>	607		
<i>Winning Threshold by Round</i>	304		

**Mayor**

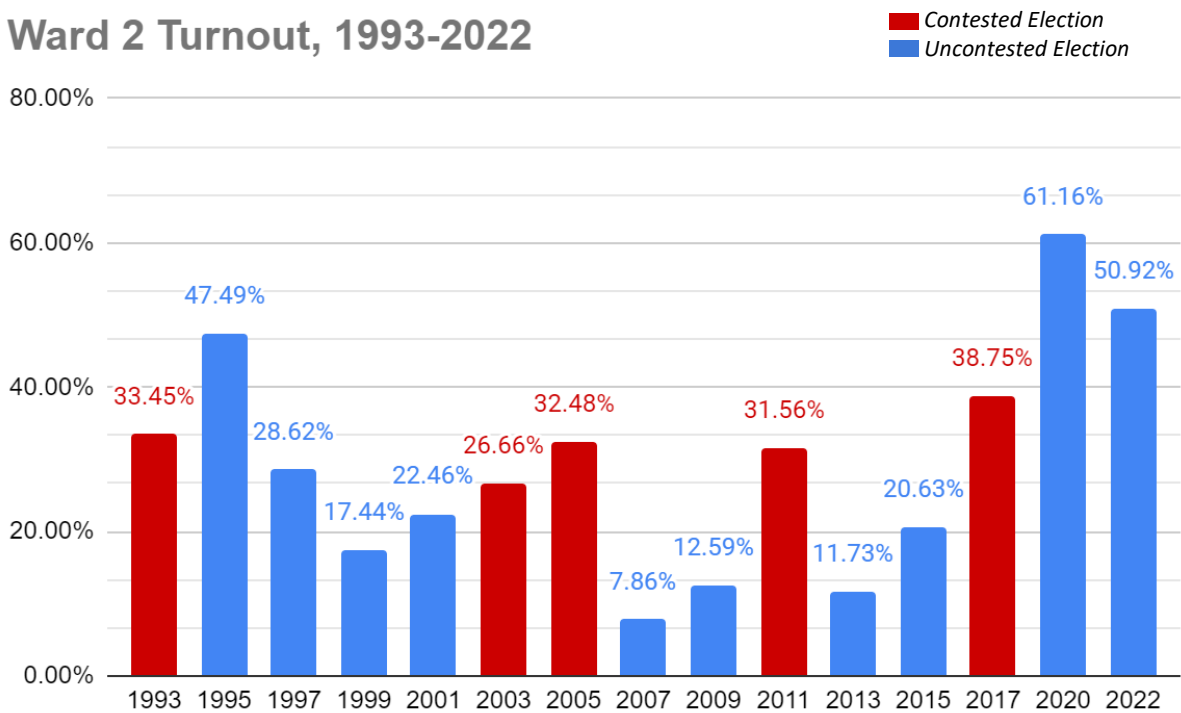
<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Ward 1</i>	<i>Ward 2</i>	<i>Ward 3</i>	<i>Ward 4</i>	<i>Ward 5</i>	<i>Ward 6</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percent of Votes</i>	<i>Status</i>
<i>Grimes</i>	432	295	409	223	148	152	1,659	29%	
<b><i>Searcy</i></b>	<b>701</b>	<b>691</b>	<b>658</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>435</b>	<b>2,974</b>	<b>52.1%</b>	<b>Elected</b>
<i>Smith</i>	263	160	307	83	177	71	1,061	18.6%	
<i>Write-in</i>	2	10	2	4	0	0	18	0.3%	
<i>Total Valid Votes</i>	1,398	1,156	1,366	631	493	658	5,712	100%	
<i>Winning Threshold</i>							2,857		

## ANNEX B: ADDITIONAL HISTORICAL TURNOUT DATA

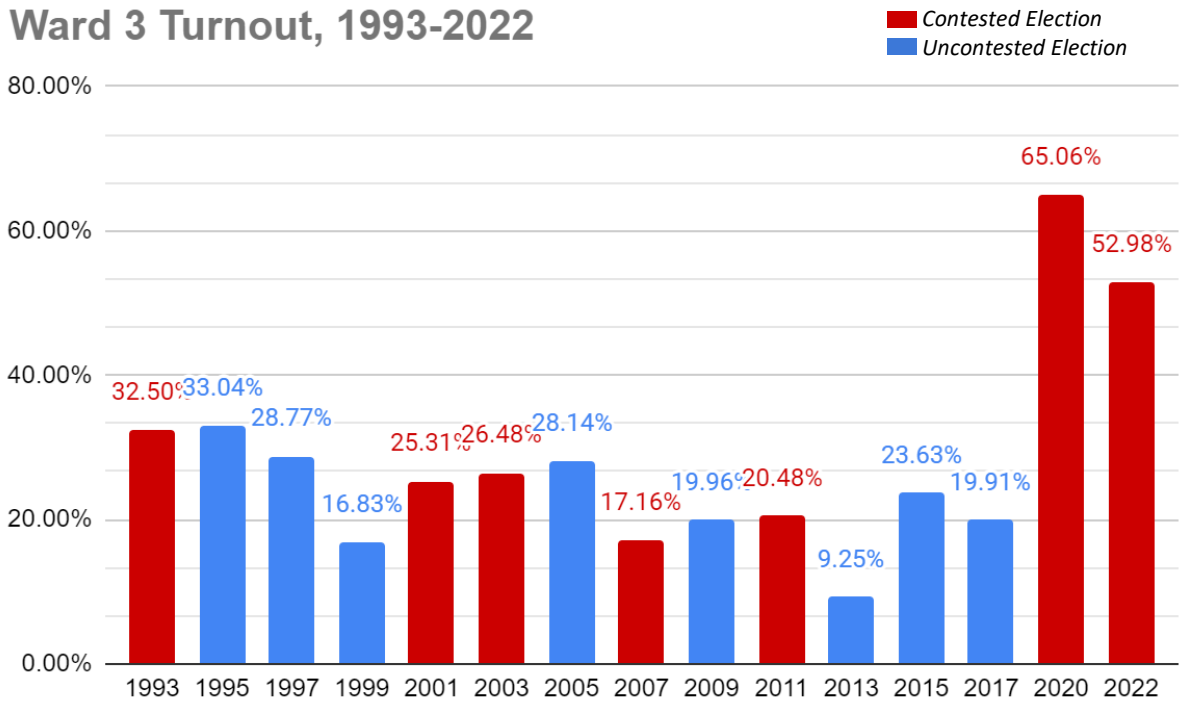
### Ward 1 Turnout, 1993-2022



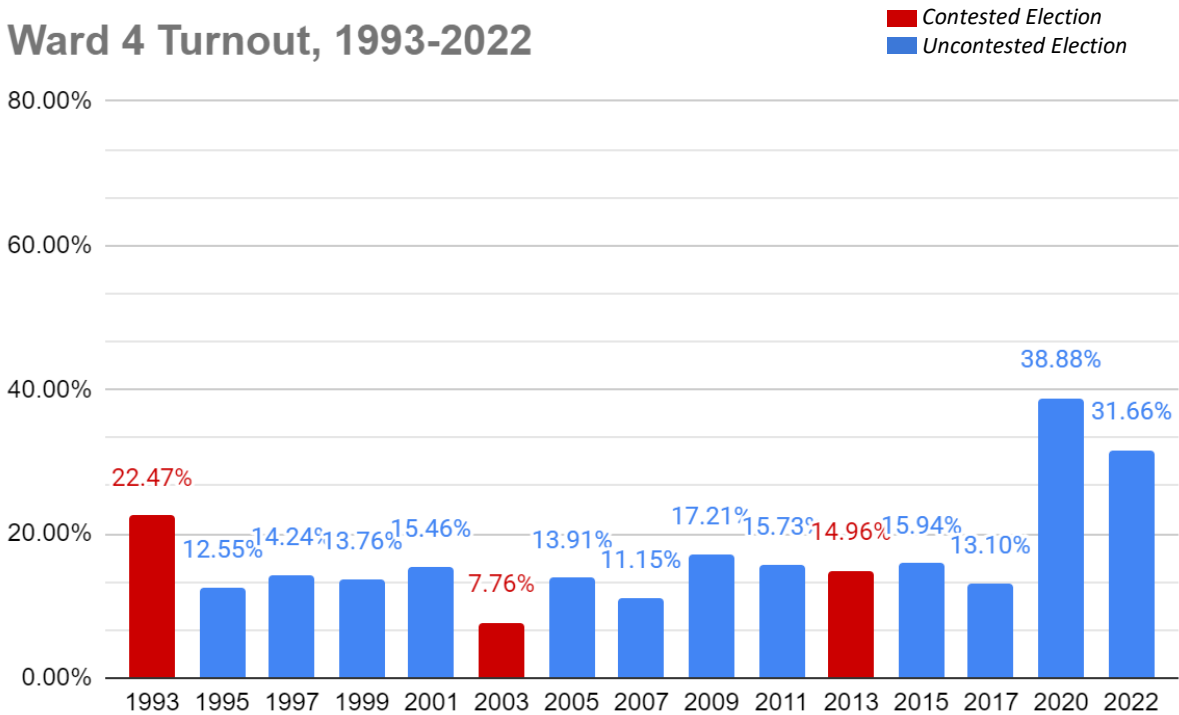
### Ward 2 Turnout, 1993-2022



### Ward 3 Turnout, 1993-2022

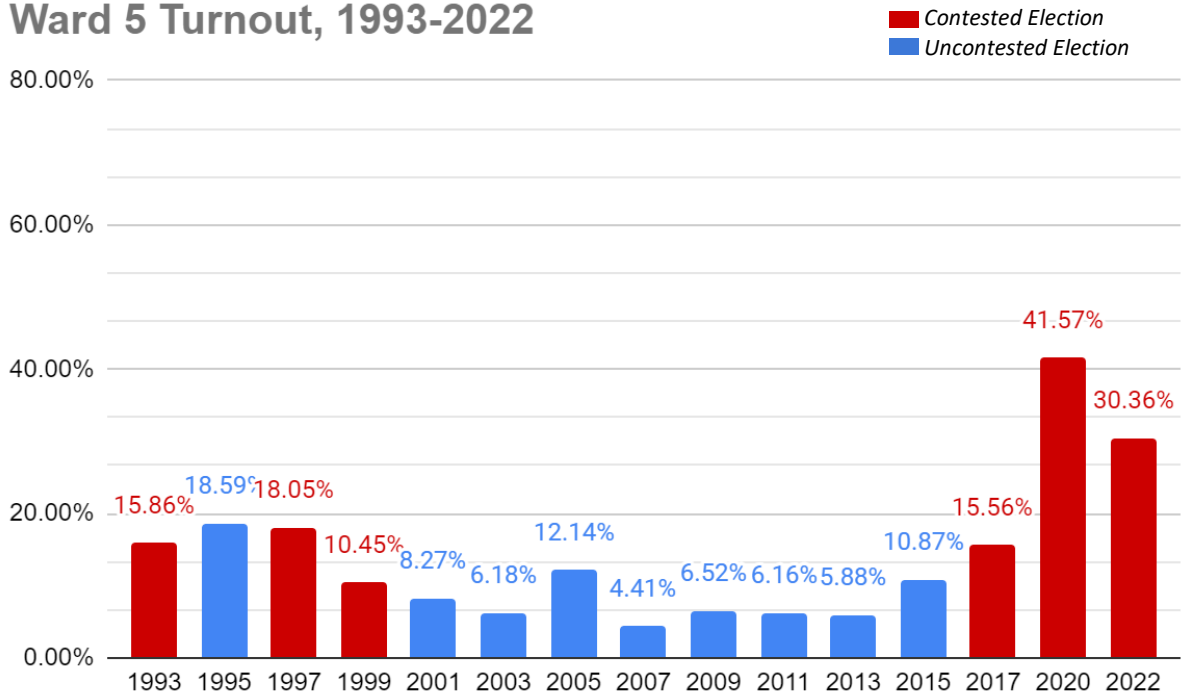


### Ward 4 Turnout, 1993-2022

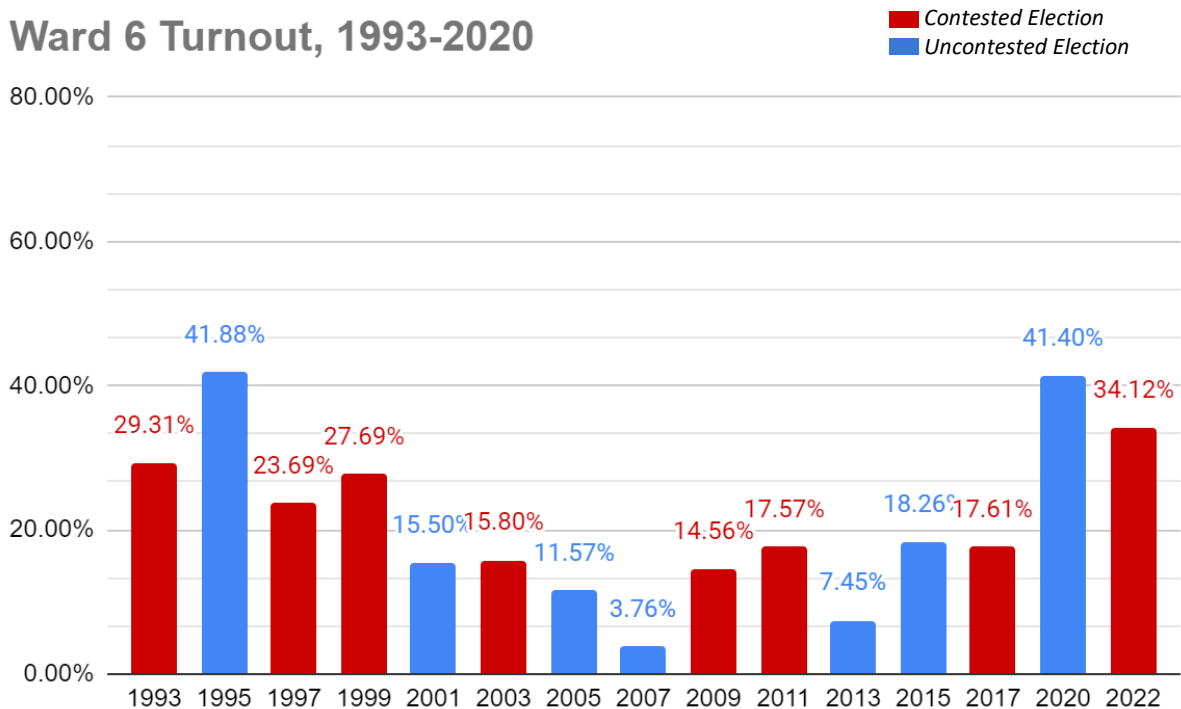




## Ward 5 Turnout, 1993-2022



## Ward 6 Turnout, 1993-2020



**ANNEX C: LIST OF WRITE-INS (FIRST CHOICE ONLY)**

*(To be added)*