Liberal north side housing goes to D3

cerns District 6 residents had voiced:

- Filipino community cohesion.
- Transbay Terminal's placement — in D6 or District 3
- Whether to include Mission Bay, drawing a line at 16th Street or Mariposa Street
- SROs and their common interests
- Keeping intact the Tenderloin's north boundary at Post
- The Valencia-McCoppin Triangle's safety concerns and keeping it whole in D6
- Whether Treasure Island would stay in D6, or go to D3.

Filipinos, Transbay Terminal and Mission Bay were all included in District 6, with a southern line dropping two blocks down to Mariposa Street. The SRO count stayed about the same. The noticeable loss was 248-room Mission Hotel at South Van Ness Avenue and 16th Street and the privately owned Bristol Hotel on Mason Street, nudged out by the jogging boundary line.

The triangle stayed largely in shape, too. The northern boundary kept half of its Post line running east from Van Ness Avenue to Leavenworth. It's ragged as it drops to Geary, O'Farrell and Ellis streets and is jagged down to Market. District 6 not only keeps Treasure Island, it gets Alcatraz Island, too.

Besides about a dozen blocks lost on the north to District 3, D6 gave up a 5,000 Hayes Valley population to District 5 in a dozen-block-long stretch west starting at Van Ness and Market, two, sometimes three, blocks deep.

The last large cut to go was north Mission, 13,600 people in about 100 blocks.

"The revised map had to assure the voting power of minorities would not be diluted or divided, and, when possible, keep recognized neighborhoods intact," Jenny Lam, task force vice chair, said in the report. ■

Tech's leading role in redistricting

Maps change instantly with click of a mouse

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

WHEN Redistricting Task Force members began meeting in July, their consultant used a software program that brought the latest technology to a knotty problem: deciding how to reconfigure the city's 11 supervisorial districts boundaries with speed and clarity that would be immediately understandable to all.

Hired to operate the program, Maptitude for Redistricting, was Karin Mac Donald. Her day job is director of the Statewide Database, a redistricting resource that the Institute of Governmental Studies hosts at U.C. Berkeley. Mac Donald also heads Q2 Data & Research, a small, women-owned consulting firm in Oakland. She and a colleague attended all 30-plus task force meetings, manipulating maps with a laptop and shifting boundaries projected on a screen with the click of a mouse.

Maps could be viewed and analysed four ways — from each of the city's 7,386 census blocks, the 581 census block groups, the 197 census tracts and the 11 color-coded supervisorial districts. As Mac Donald got requests to alter a district's configuration, she'd scroll to the area and add or delete blocks.

Every change shifted the population of that district and its neighbors, showing instantly as a box with a new population number and the percentage that number deviated from the mean.

The idea is that with 11 districts and a citywide population of 805,235, the mean population of each district would be about 73,200 people. The City Charter and the U.S. Constitution say local legislative districts must have "equal populations" to maintain the one person-one vote mandate. A district's population can deviate no more than 5% above or below 73,203 people.

At the start of the redistricting process, District 6's population deviation was the most skewed in the city, almost 30%, over the 73,203 mean. At the other end of "ideal," District 9 lost more than 10% (7,530 people). When redistricting was done in mid-April, District 6's deviation came in at 706 people, a modest 0.964%.

Over the months it took to get all 11 districts to ideal deviations, Mac Donald handled the technical aspects of adjusting boundary lines over and over in meetings, projecting the full city map, then focusing tighter into a single district.

"The task force members might ask to see a specific street or intersection or the population of a single block," she said. "We'd zoom in, they'd deliberate and decide about the change, then we'd move to the next change." Every half-hour or so, she'd zoom out so all of the districts could be seen.

The task force also asked periodically for a citywide analysis of race or ethnicity, which Maptitude displays by showing lightly populated areas in a faint color — say pale pink for up to 10% Asians in one neighborhood and deep red for 90%-100% in another.

"Race and ethnicity can't be a predominant criterion [in redistricting] by law, so the task force used it infrequently," Mac Donald said, but it can contribute to more informed decision-making.

The ability of the task force to do real-time shaping is what's put Maptitude — well, on the map. The program developer, Caliper Corp. of Maine, claims to have tens of thousands of users worldwide for its several programs. The redistricting version is used by congressional, state, city, county, school, water or other districts.

"Because people are participating in the process live," Mac Donald says, "they can visualize the information and also understand the constraints better — how moving a boundary line one block affects a single district, its neighbors and the whole. "

Her main complaint about Maptitude for Redistricting is that expected competition from other software designers hasn't materialized, driving up the price: In 2002, when San Francisco used Maptitude in its first redistricting process, the program was in beta testing and cost under $1,000. Today, it costs $7,500. It doesn't invite much competition, she says, because redistricting is but once a decade, and the market is limited to political jurisdictions. ■