

Report on  
Complaints Received by  
the Ombudsman's Office  
February 2018 - January 2019

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March 29, 2019



CITY OF DETROIT

**OMBUDSMAN**

BRUCE SIMPSON, CITY OMBUDSMAN

*"Improving Your Quality of Life On a Daily Basis"*





BRUCE SIMPSON  
CITY OF DETROIT  
OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

COLEMAN A. YOUNG MUNICIPAL CENTER  
2 WOODWARD AVE., SUITE 114  
DETROIT, MICHIGAN 48226  
PHONE 313•224•6000 TTY:311  
FAX 313•224•1911  
WWW.DETROITMI.GOV

March 29, 2019

The Honorable Detroit City Council  
City of Detroit  
1340 CAYMC  
Detroit, MI 48226

**RE: Ombudsman Budget Analysis FY 2019-20**

Dear Council Members:

I would like to say thank you to your Honorable Body for giving me the opportunity to address the service delivery concerns and complaints of our citizens. This is the fourth report that has been issued to your Honorable Body by this Ombudsman Office. This year we have processed 5,112 complaints. Of the 5,112 complaints, the majority of them have come from the Building Safety Engineering and Environmental Department (BSEED) and the Detroit Land Bank Authority (DLBA). Combined, they account for 67% of all complaints received.

The recommendations that I have provided to you in this report address code enforcement, public safety, transportation, blight and revenue generation. With these recommendations and analysis of the budget we attempt to speak to the concerns of the masses throughout the City.

I applaud the administration for including additional lawyers within this budget for the Law Department to address expungement.

I submit this report on behalf of our residents, property owners, business owners and all persons who have contacted the Ombudsman Office during the time period of February 1, 2018 through January 31, 2019.

Respectfully submitted,

Bruce Simpson  
City Ombudsman

*"Improving Your Quality of Life On a Daily Basis"*





## Ombudsman Recommendations

- Termination of the Demolition Management Agreement between the City of Detroit and the Detroit Building Authority (DBA). Place the function of demolition in the Housing and Revitalization Department (HRD) with Buildings Safety Engineering and Environmental Department (BSEED) providing oversight.
- Cadaver Dogs for dangerous buildings and properties scheduled for demolition
- Moratorium on Detroit Land Bank Authority (DLBA) Nuisance and Abatement Program (NAP) for residents of Detroit
- Citywide review conducted by Planning & Development (PDD), as well as community engagement on the implementation of bike lanes

### Termination of Demolition Management Agreement

There has been plenty of discussion concerning additional oversight of the demolition program due to the publicly noted controversy behind it and an ongoing investigation. Placing the function in BSEED, HRD or any other city department will not accomplish the desired level of oversight. If that model is used, the DBA will still oversee the management of the program, whether federal funds are still in use or the funding comes from the general fund. The opportunity to ensure full oversight of the program requires the termination of the “Demolition Management Agreement by and between the City of Detroit Building Authority and the City of Detroit”. This agreement was executed on August 11, 2015 and filed on August 18, 2015. The language in this agreement states that the termination of the agreement can be achieved in August of 2019.

There are three components necessary to achieve the oversight we are looking for. There has to be a city department in place to address all demolition concerns, BSEED oversight and the termination of the agreement mentioned above in order to achieve the oversight we are looking for.

Here is our justification for making this recommendation:



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- The inability to consistently form sound policy related to important issues such as capacity for contractors. A problematic capacity policy has led to a lack of competition in the programs. It has also created winners and losers, which ultimately, causes pricing to rise.
- The DLBA was forced to take over the procurement process, due to the DBA's inability to appropriately manage that aspect of the program. As a result, DLBA's procurement process has been outsourced to Price Waterhouse Cooper.
- Lack of minority participation in both the DLBA and city demolition programs. Many minority demolition contractors are either out of business or have been severely reduced to performing demolition in the private sector.
- Inconsistent application of existing demolition policies. The policies governing demolition are subject to change at any time. Thus, creating policy in real time, as they move forward with the program.
- Potential environmental concerns due to a lack of oversight and internal quality controls as it relates to materials used for back fill.
- The licensing, training, certifications and experience that exist for BSEED inspectors are not in place for DBA field liaisons, as well as managerial staff.

### **Cadaver Dogs for Dangerous Buildings and Properties Slated for Demolition**

Dangerous buildings that are open to trespass represent an opportunity for a number of crimes to be committed. One of the worst crimes reported all too often is the dumping of a dead body at one of these locations. Bodies are sometimes buried at the site, well hidden or susceptible to arson in an attempt to cover up their presence. Based on data obtained from the Law Enforcement Information Network and the Michigan State Police, as of March 18, 2019 there are a total of 3,125 missing persons in Macomb, Oakland and Wayne Counties combined. Out of the 3,125 missing, 2,889 of them are in Wayne County. To date, the City of Detroit has demolished over 17,000 and there are at least another 20,000 properties that need to be removed.

I believe a partnership with the State Police K-9 Unit is worth looking at in order to survey properties that have been, either slated for demolition or are recognized as a dangerous building. If this proposal only yields one body, one missing person case closed, it would be worth it. The missing persons mentioned represent someone's family or friend.

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### **Moratorium on DLBA Nuisance and Abatement Program (NAP) for Residents**

The property owned by DLBA currently sits at 93,921 parcels according to the DLBA quarterly report issued January 15, 2019. The report further states that 27,610 structures are a part of that number and have been categorized appropriately within their respective inventory. The Nuisance and Abatement Program is a great tool that has and can help us address out of town investors that walk away from their properties, Limited Liability Companies, speculators and even banking institutions that are not willing to maintain their property. However, it is highly hypocritical for the DLBA, which cannot maintain the property within its own inventory, to take property from residents of the city that are attempting to rehab their properties. Ultimately, you are penalizing those that may not possess the financial resources to move at the pace desired by the DLBA. Furthermore, this tactic is exercised in specific neighborhoods and not throughout the entire city, which can make a community feel targeted. It is clear that the intent is to increase property value within certain neighborhoods, but we have to be mindful of the persons we are bringing litigation against and address each potential NAP property on a case by case scenario.

### **Bike Lanes**

The implementation of bike lanes throughout the city, combined with a lack of community engagement regarding their implementation has proven to be problematic. As a city, we have developed a bad practice of implementation first and consultation later. You can see this practice carried out in development deals, as well as the bike lanes. The Ombudsman Office recognizes PDD's attempt to connect neighborhoods to jobs, businesses, and recreational opportunities through the bike lanes. However, the bike lanes have presented more challenges and less benefits in certain parts of the city. As a result of their implementation, there is an overall reduction of driving lanes on major thoroughfares and snow removal has to be performed in a way that it accommodates the bike lanes. In some scenarios you have additional parking spaces located next to the bike lanes on the street.

There are places throughout the city where bike lanes make sense, serve a legitimate purpose and we are not opposed to them. However, the amount of resources, time, money and personnel dedicated to this project is nonsensical. A project such as this, should never be a priority, when, as a city, we have so many problems that need to be addressed. Struggling Detroiters care about items of necessity such as affordable housing, access to affordable water, home repair grants, reduction of crime, blight and public transportation. These issues should be the priority when we discuss the allocation of our resources.

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# Neighborhoods

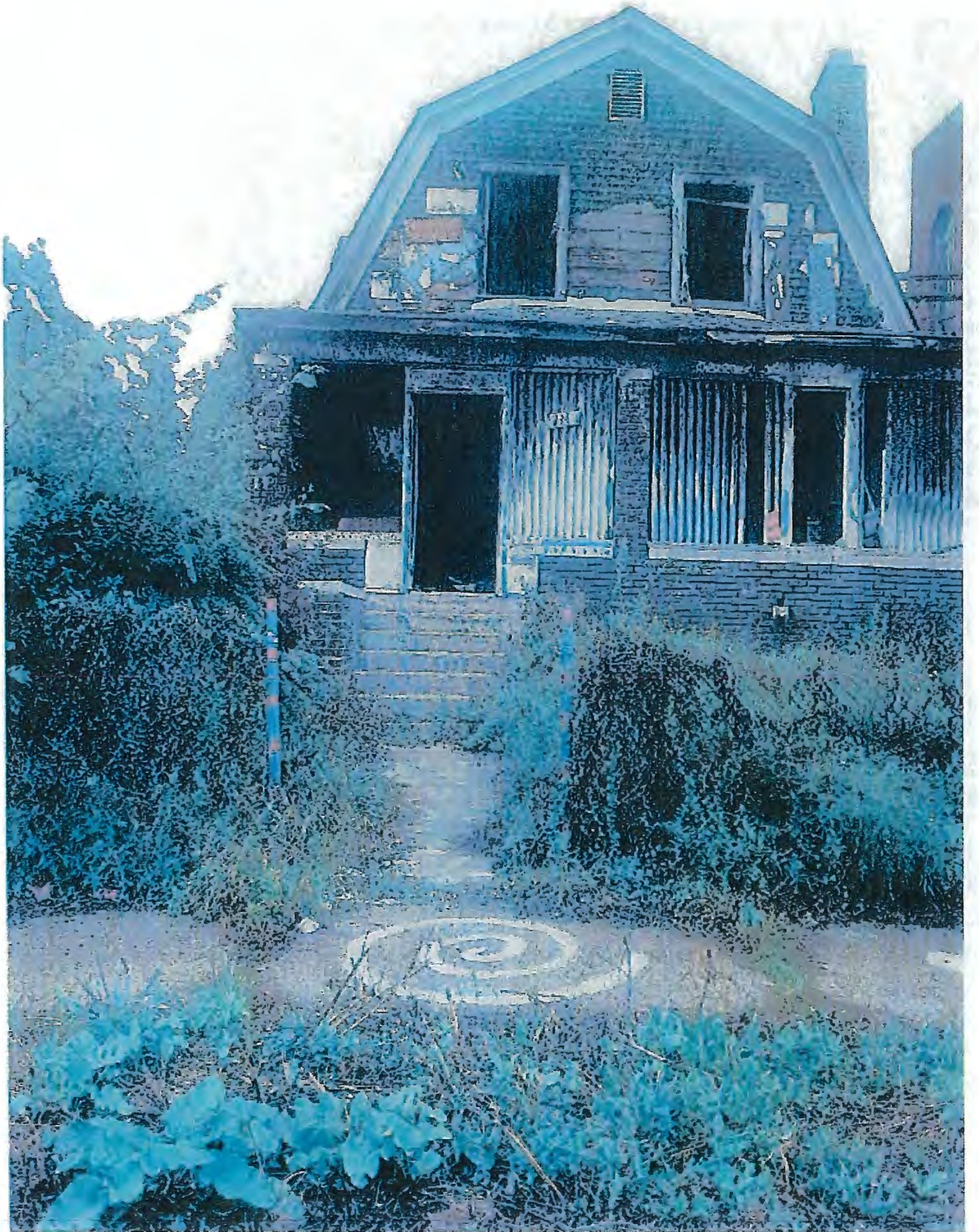














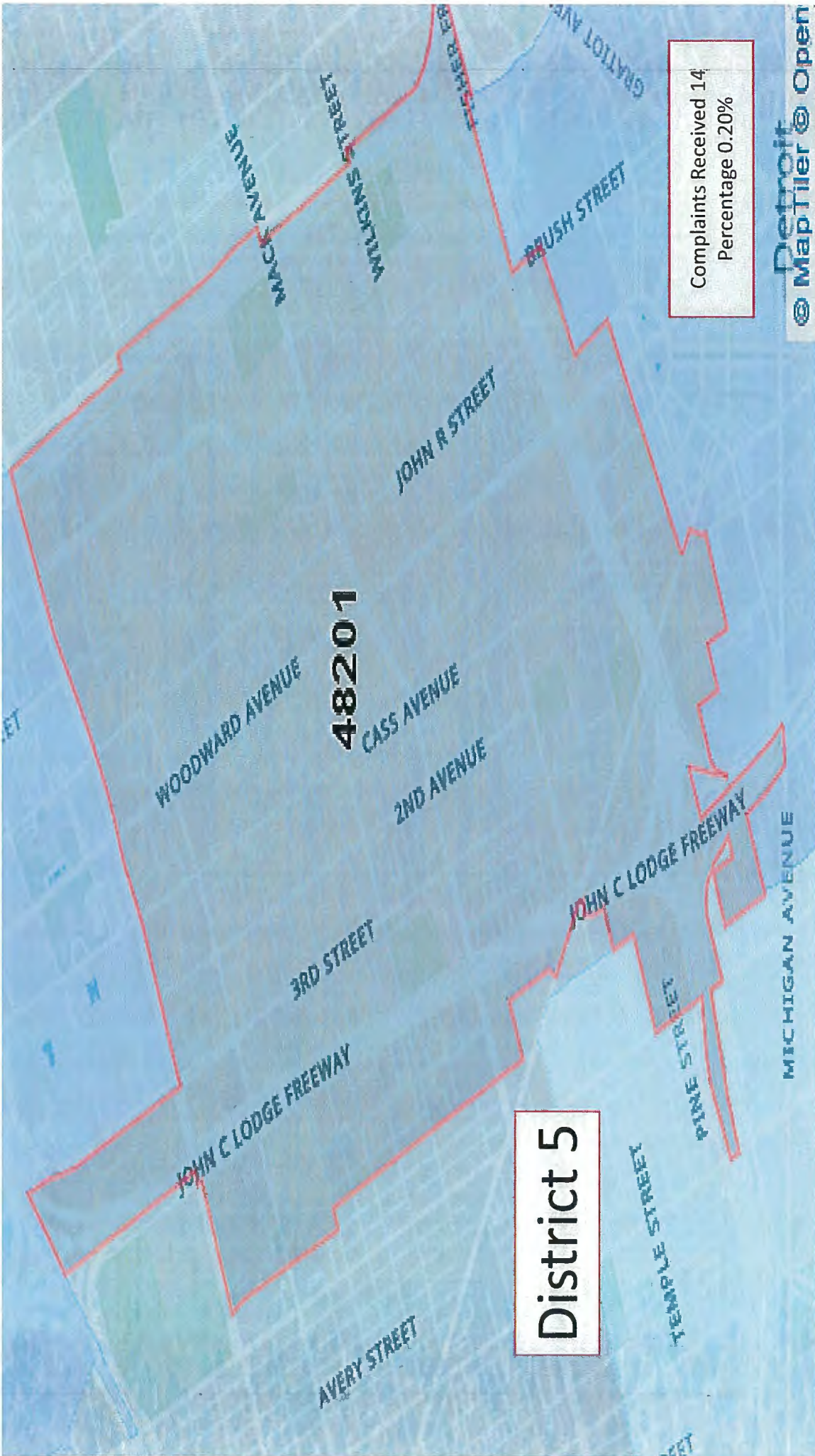






**Complaints by Zip Code  
February 1, 2018-January 31, 2019**

<b>Zip Codes</b>	<b>Complaints Received</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
48201	14	0.20%
48202	64	1.20%
48203	178	3.40%
48204	222	4.30%
48205	444	8.70%
48206	185	3.60%
48207	96	1.90%
48208	68	1.30%
48209	85	1.70%
48210	118	2.30%
48211	113	2.20%
48212	90	1.80%
48213	384	7.50%
48214	165	3.20%
48215	99	1.90%
48216	17	0.30%
48217	35	0.68%
48219	353	7.00%
48221	232	4.60%
48223	132	2.60%
48224	297	5.90%
48226	46	0.90%
48227	331	6.50%
48228	333	6.50%
48234	227	4.40%
48235	300	5.90%
48238	464	9.00%
Other	20	0.40%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5112</b>	



48201

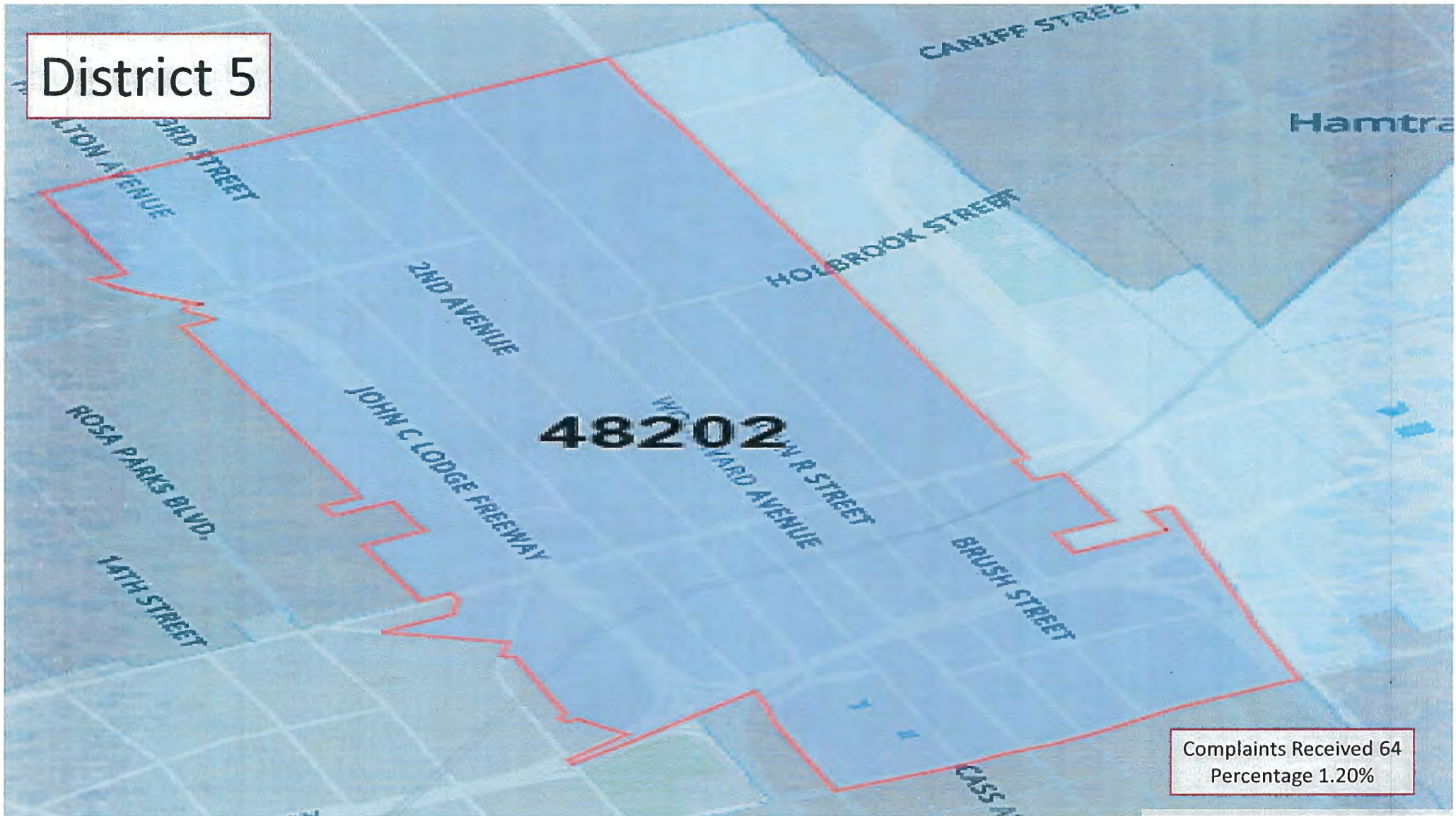
District 5

Complaints Received 14  
Percentage 0.20%

# District 5

48202

Complaints Received 64  
Percentage 1.20%





**District 5**

Complaints Received 178  
Percentage 3.40%

**48203**

Highland Park

EAST 8 MILE

CONANT STREET

JOSEPH CA

DEQUINDRE ST

DEQUINDRE ST

EAST 7 MILE RD.

EAST NEVADA ST.

SOUTH WALTER P. CHRYSLER FREEWAY

JOHN R. STREET

WOODWARD AVENUE

HAMILTON AVENUE  
3RD STREET

WEST MCNICHOLS RD.

PURITAN STREET

JOHN C LODGE FREEWAY

14TH STREET

FENKELL STREET

MILE ROAD

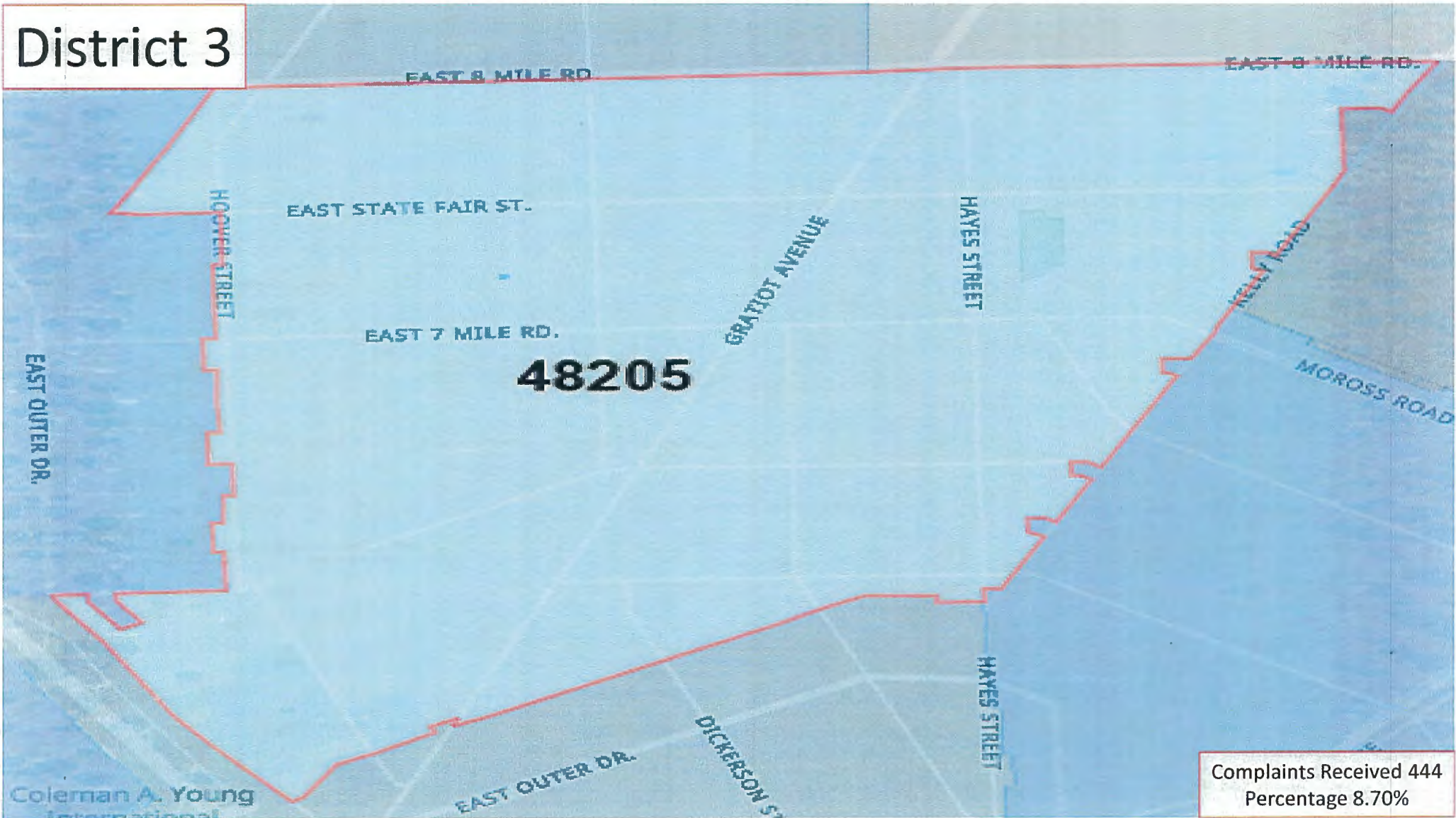


District 6

48204

Complaints Received 222  
Percentage 4.30%

# District 3



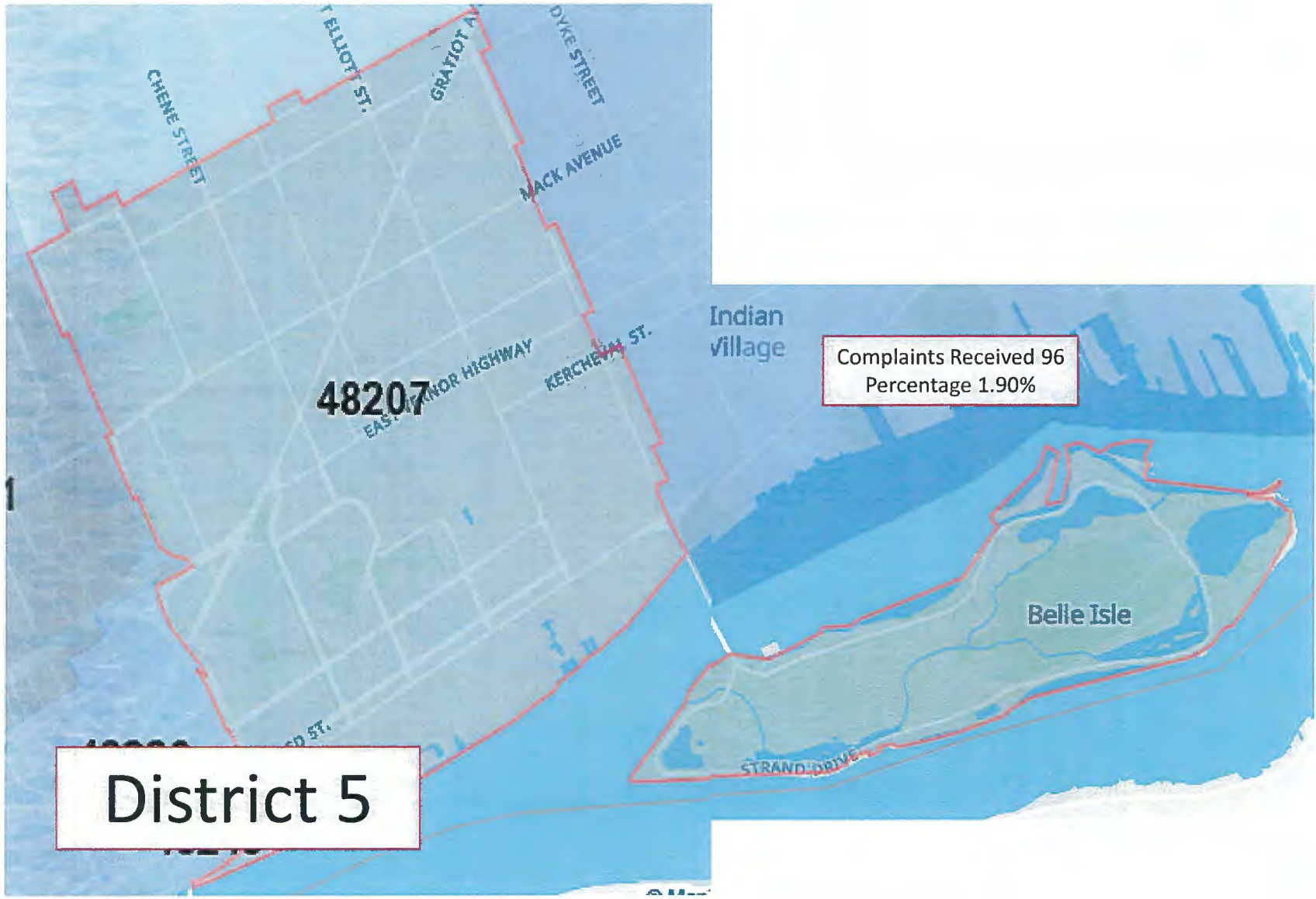
Complaints Received 444  
Percentage 8.70%



District 5

48206

Complaints Received 185  
Percentage 3.60%



**District 5**

Complaints Received 96  
Percentage 1.90%





Complaints Received 68  
Percentage 1.30%

District 5

WEST 48208

© ManTiler @ OpenStr

NUE

District 6



48209

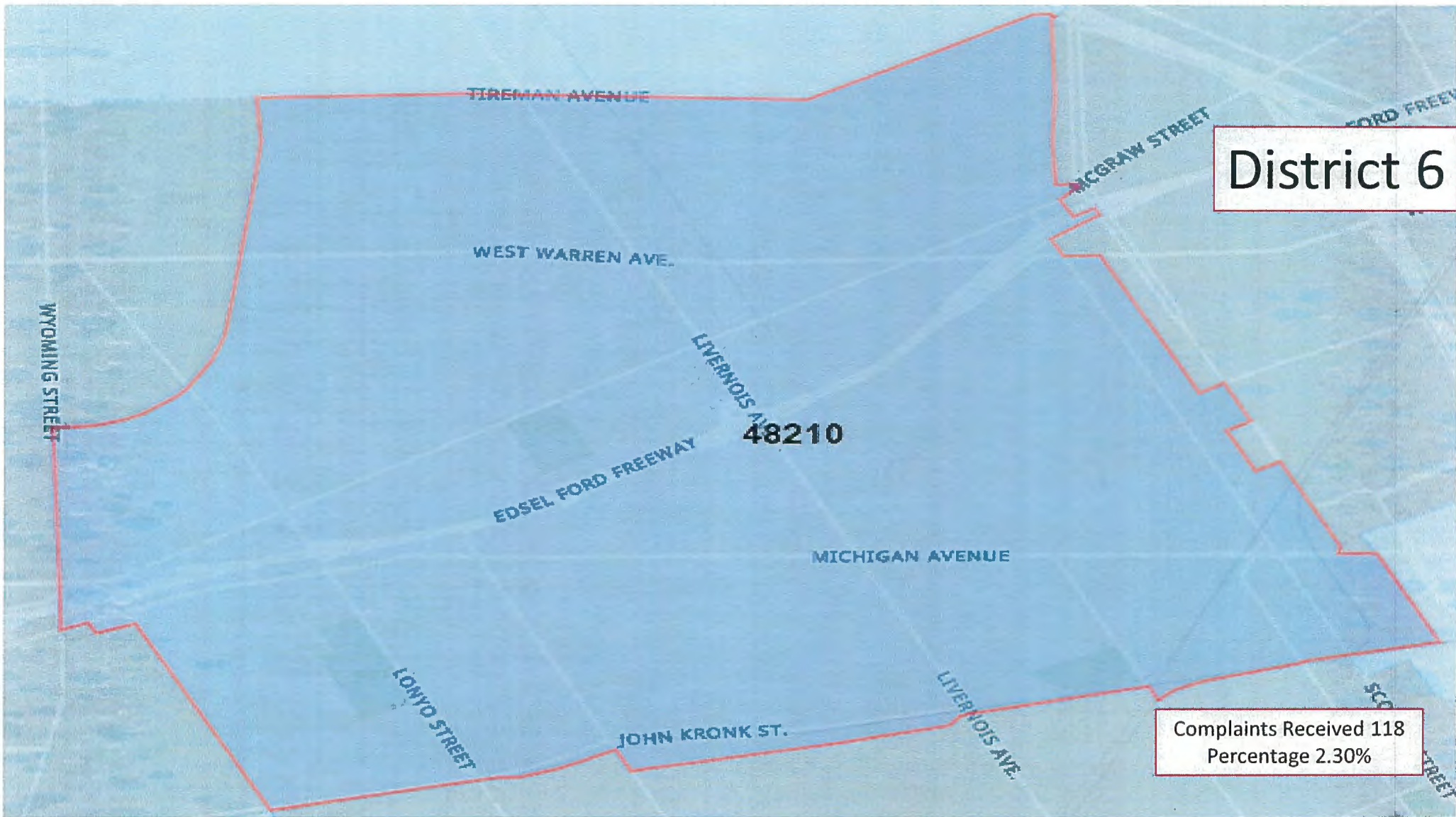
Delray Junction

Delray

Zug Island

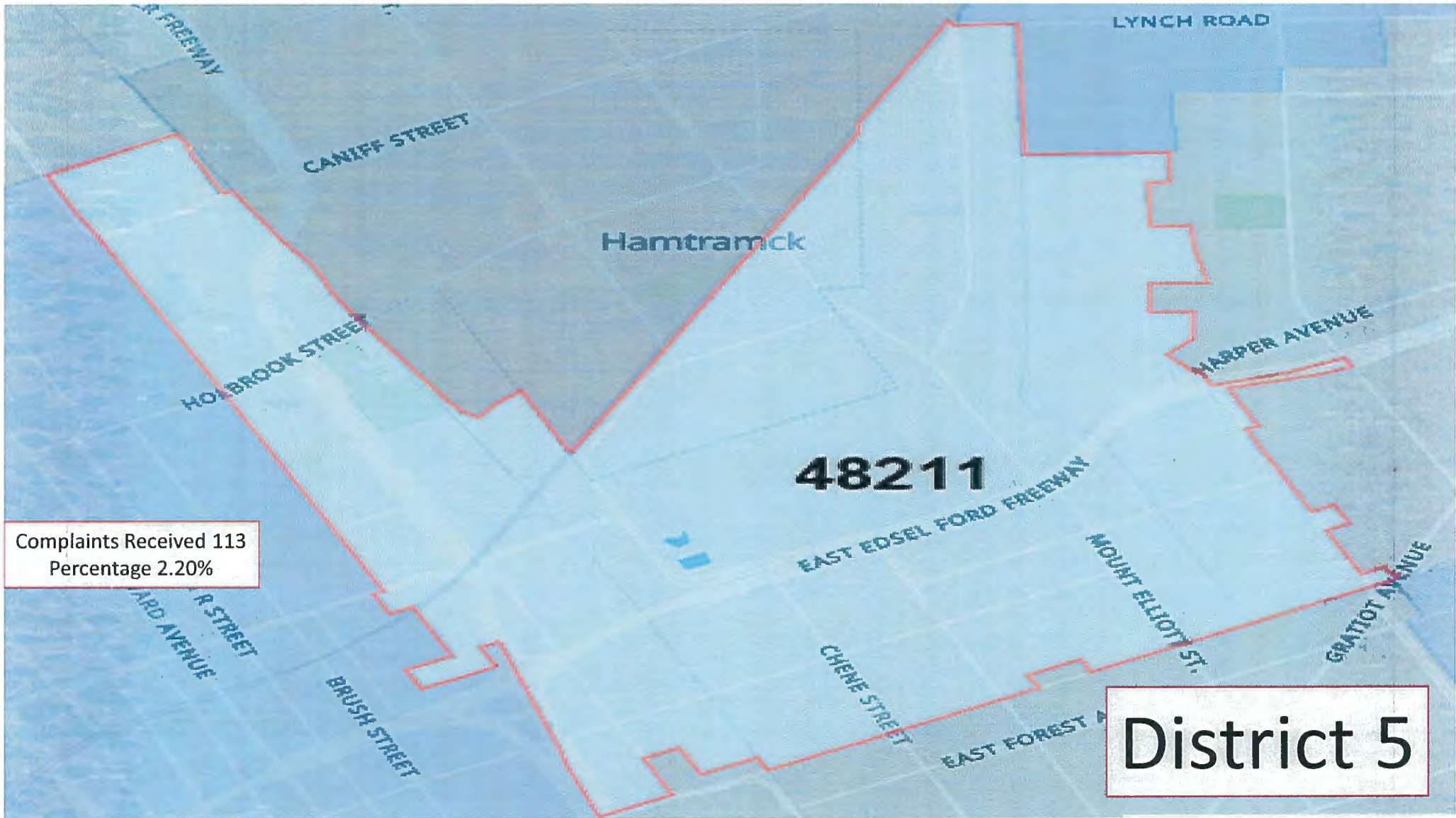
FISHER FREEWAY

Complaints Received 85  
Percentage 1.70%



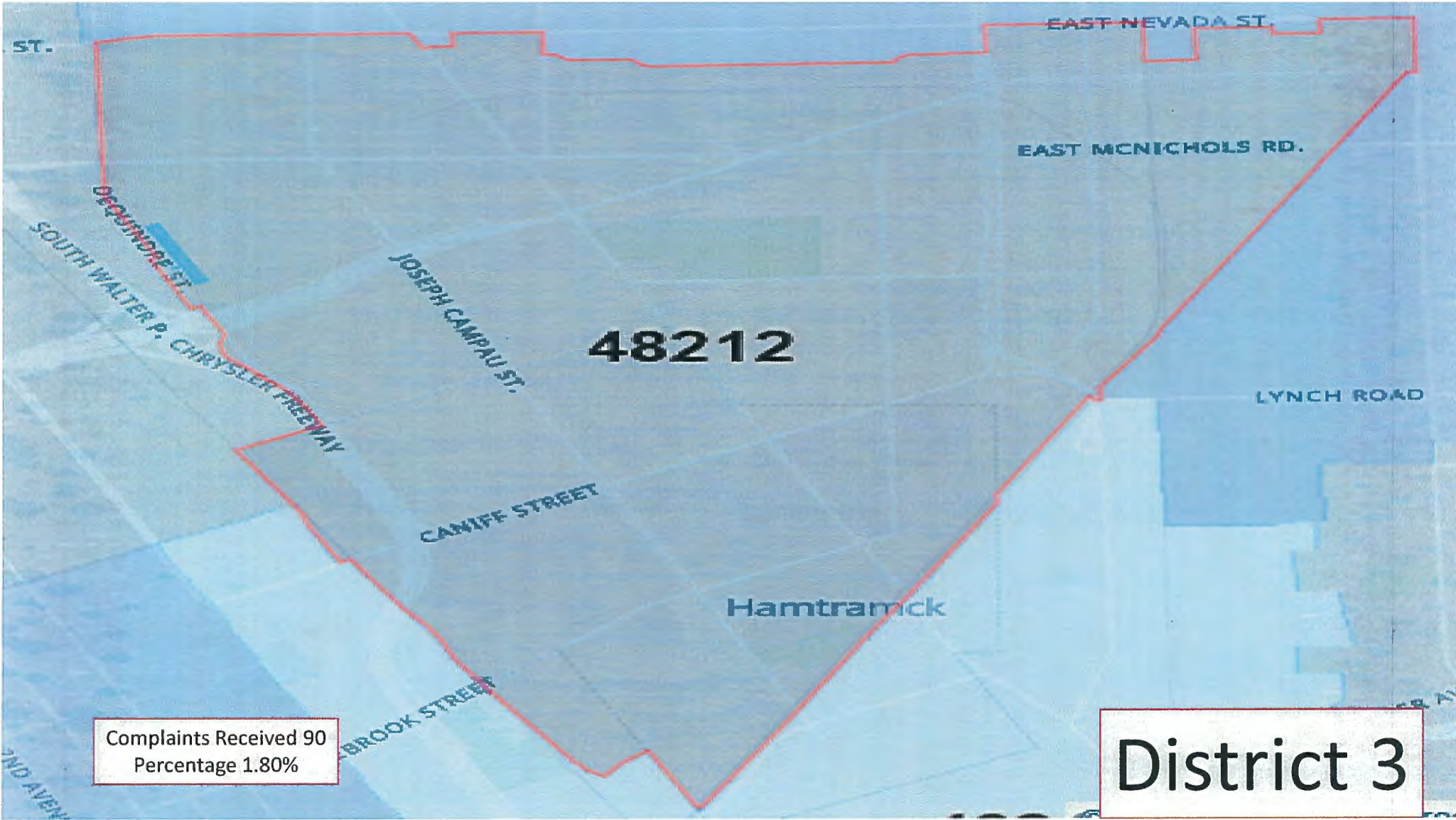
District 6

Complaints Received 118  
Percentage 2.30%



Complaints Received 113  
Percentage 2.20%

**District 5**



48212

Complaints Received 90  
Percentage 1.80%

District 3

# District 3



**48213**

Complaints Received 384  
Percentage 7.50%

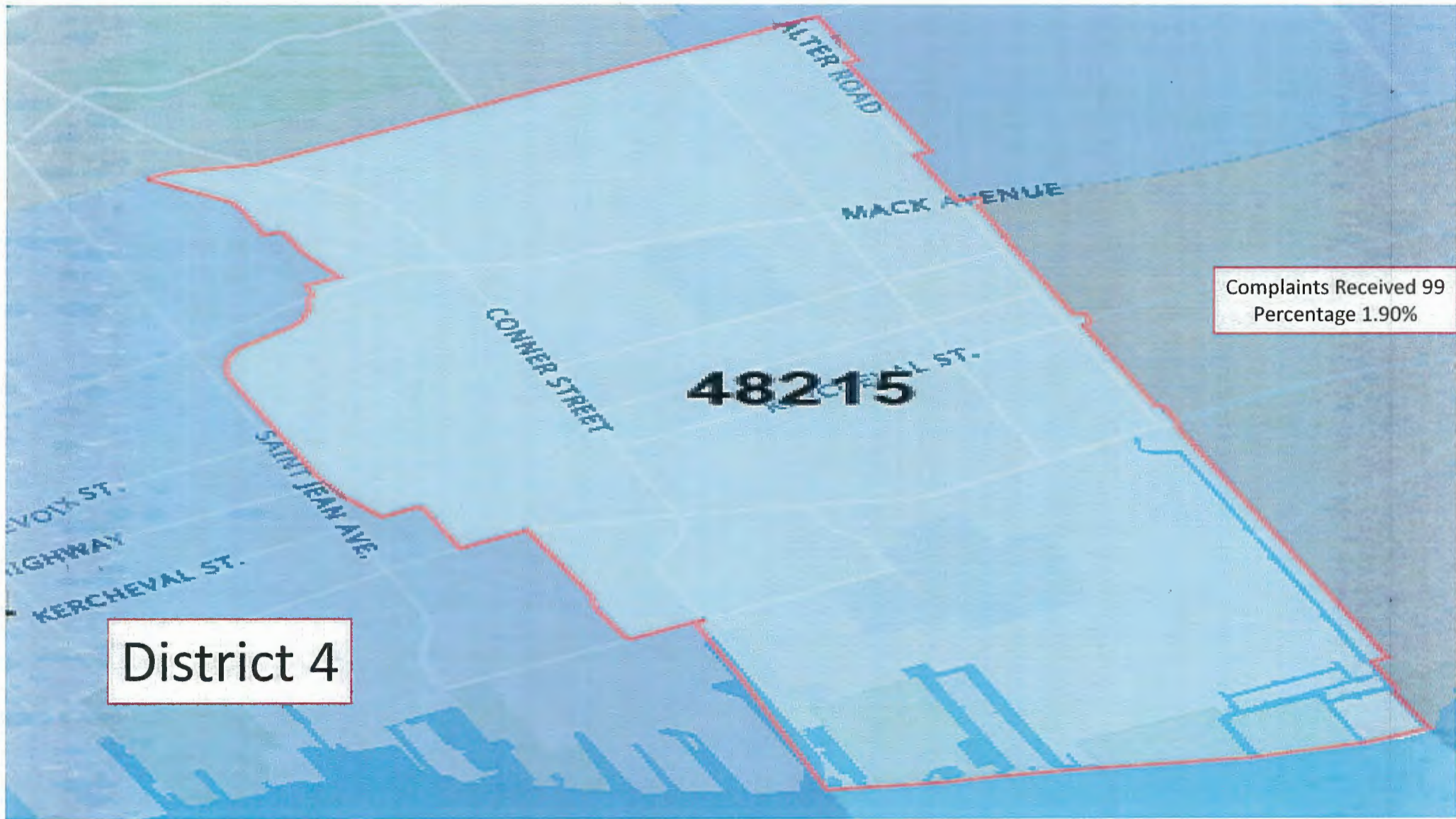


District 5

48214

Indian Village

Complaints Received 165  
Percentage 3.20%



Complaints Received 99  
Percentage 1.90%

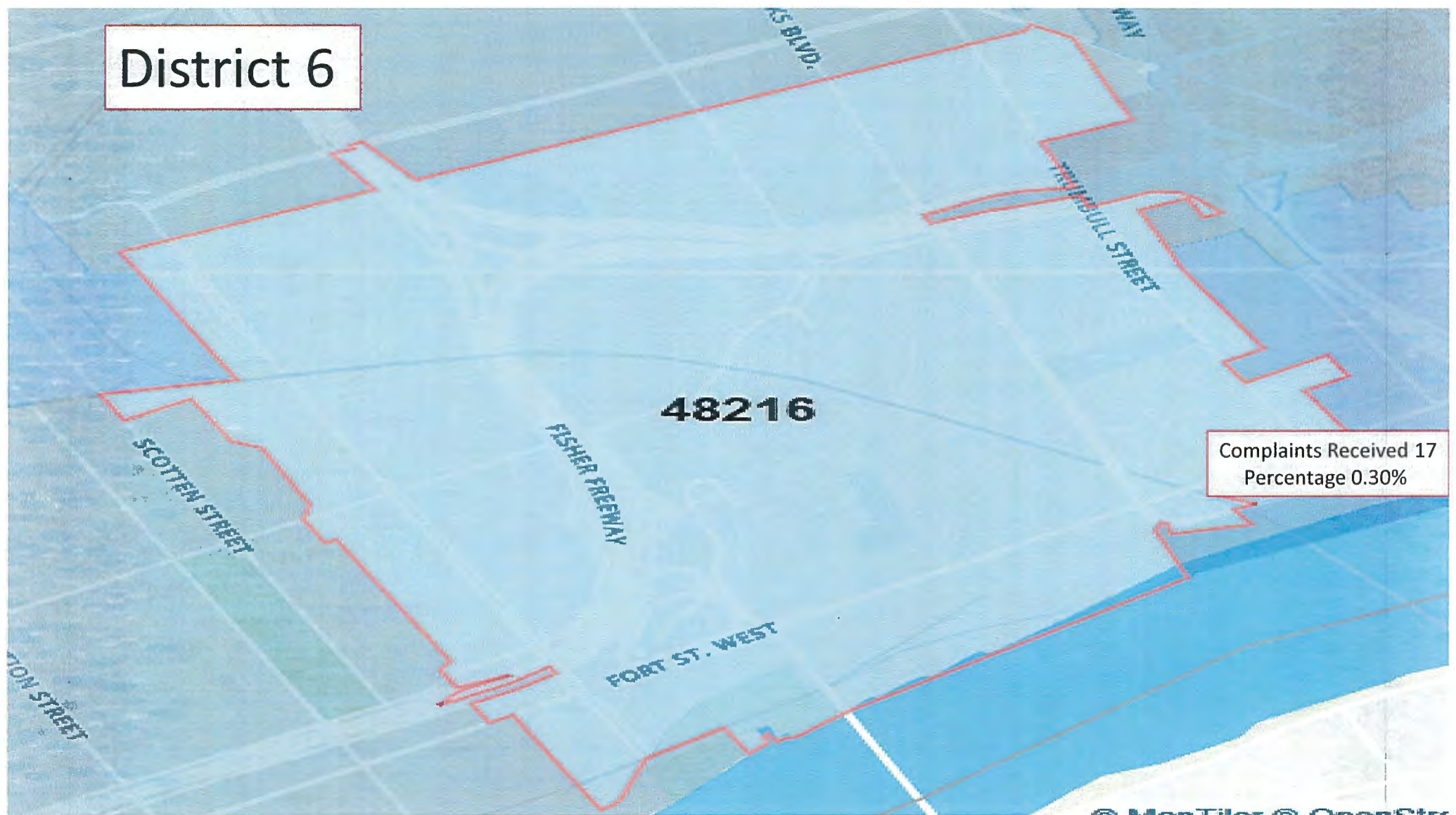
District 4



# District 6

48216

Complaints Received 17  
Percentage 0.30%

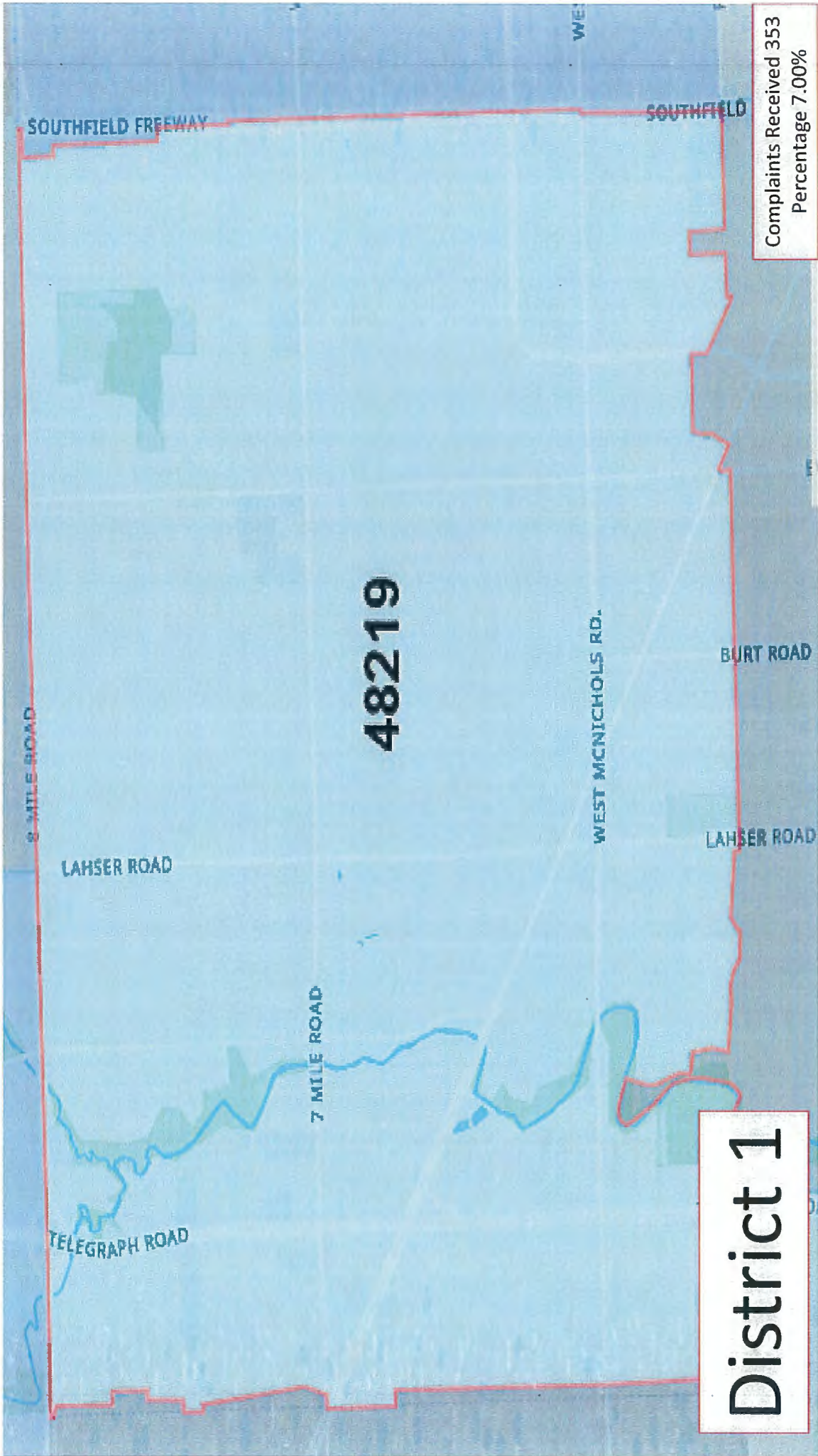




District 6

48217

Complaints Received 35  
Percentage 0.68%



Complaints Received 353  
Percentage 7.00%

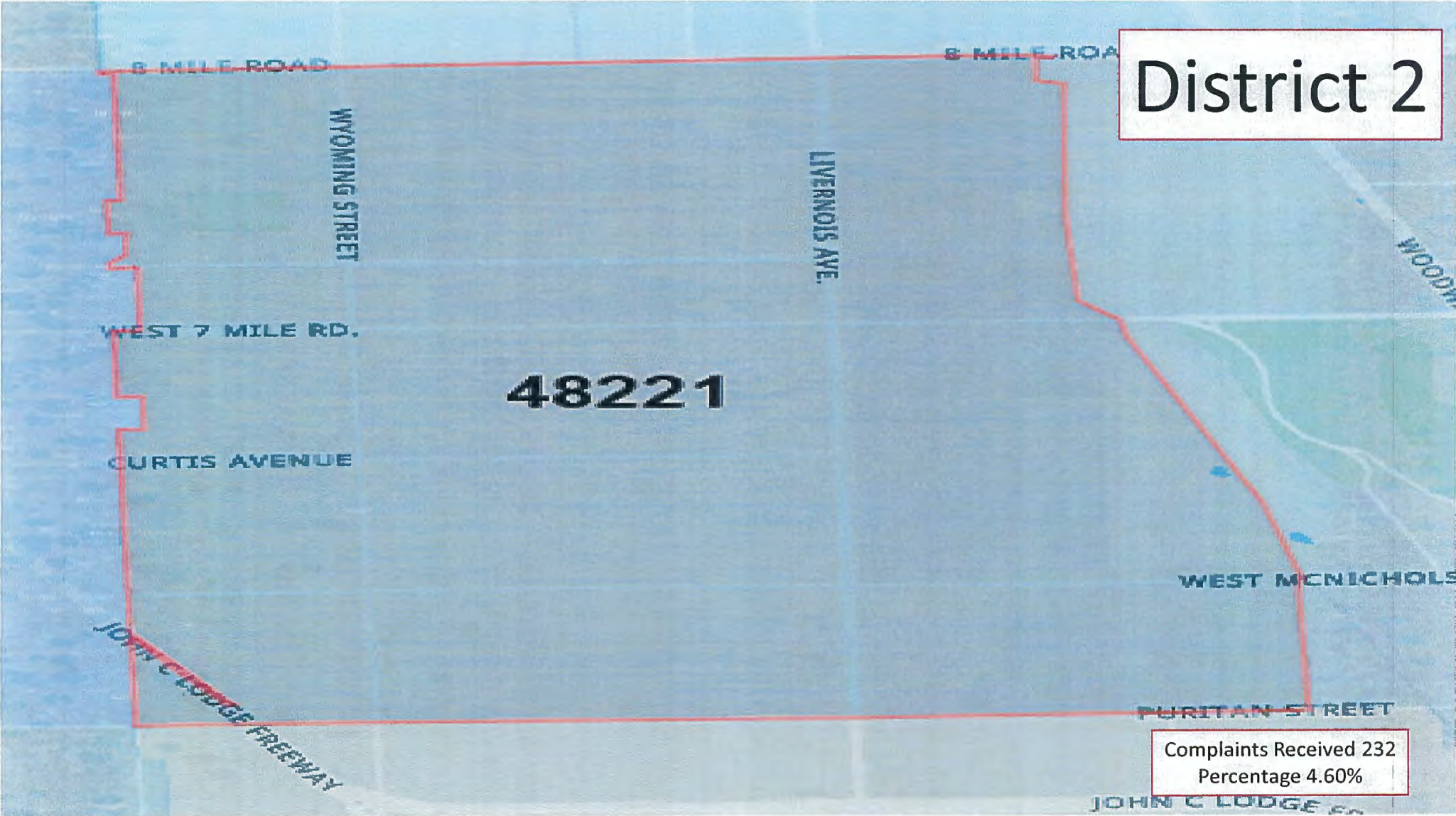
48219

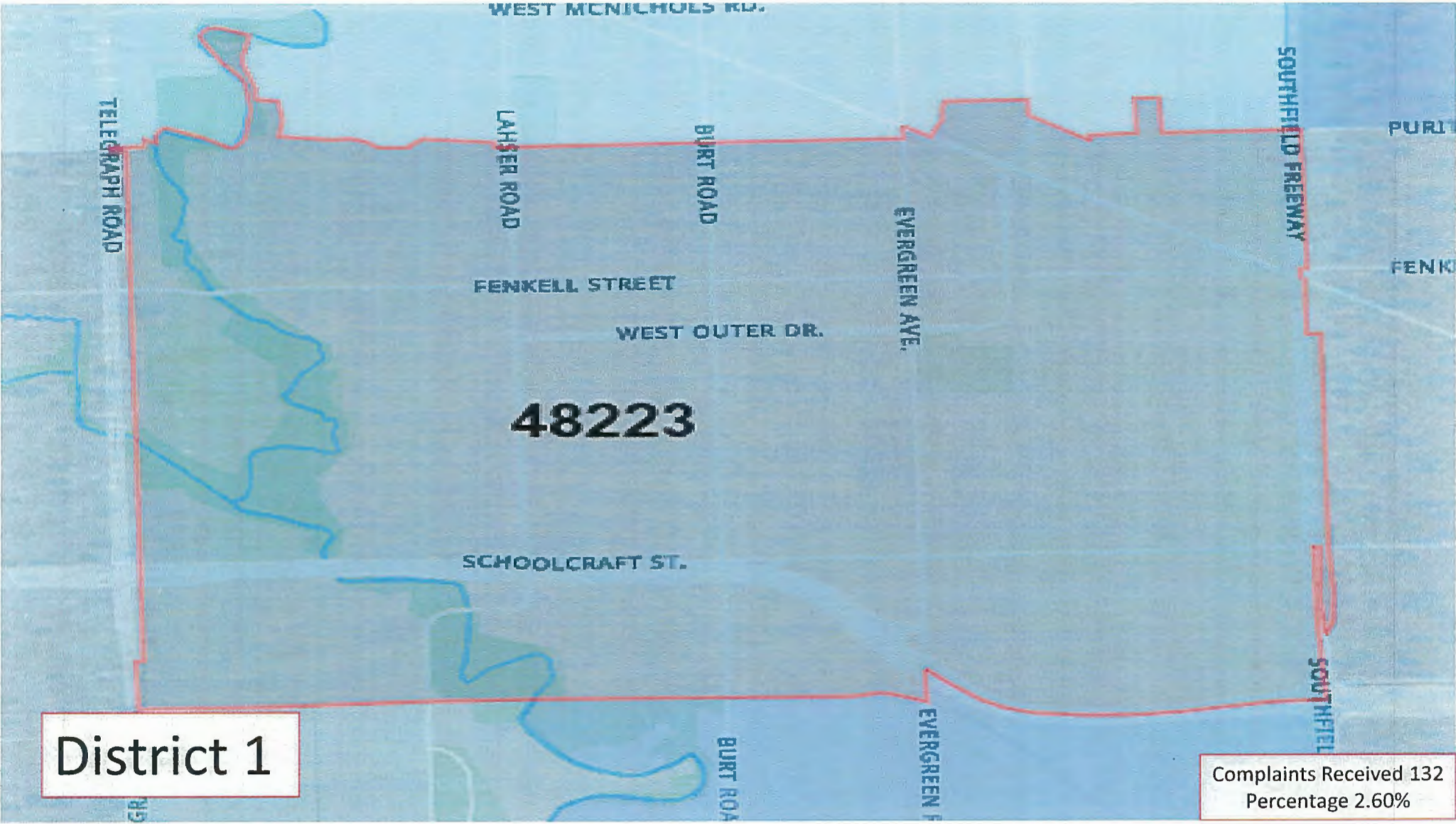
District 1

# District 2

48221

Complaints Received 232  
Percentage 4.60%





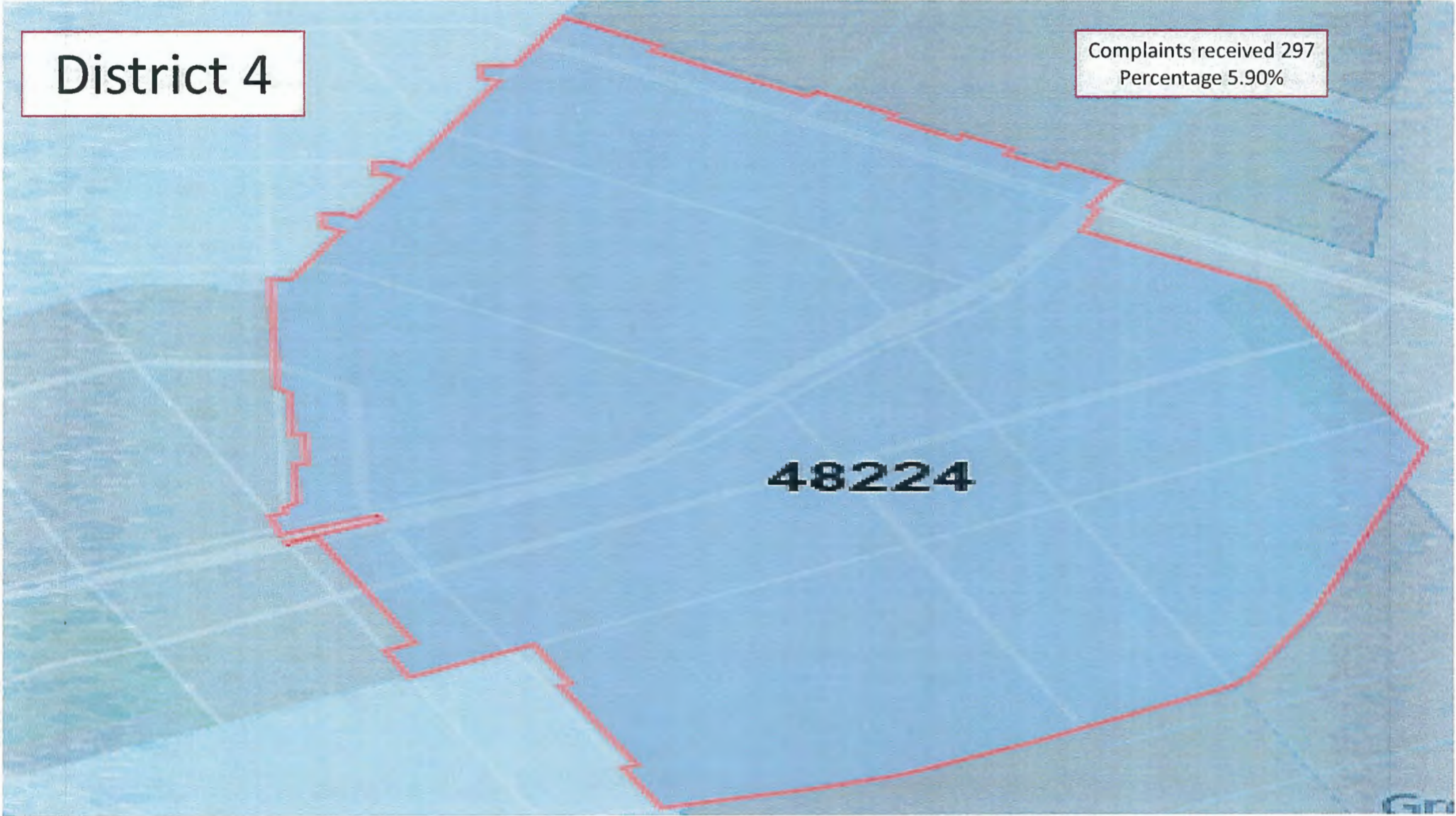
District 1

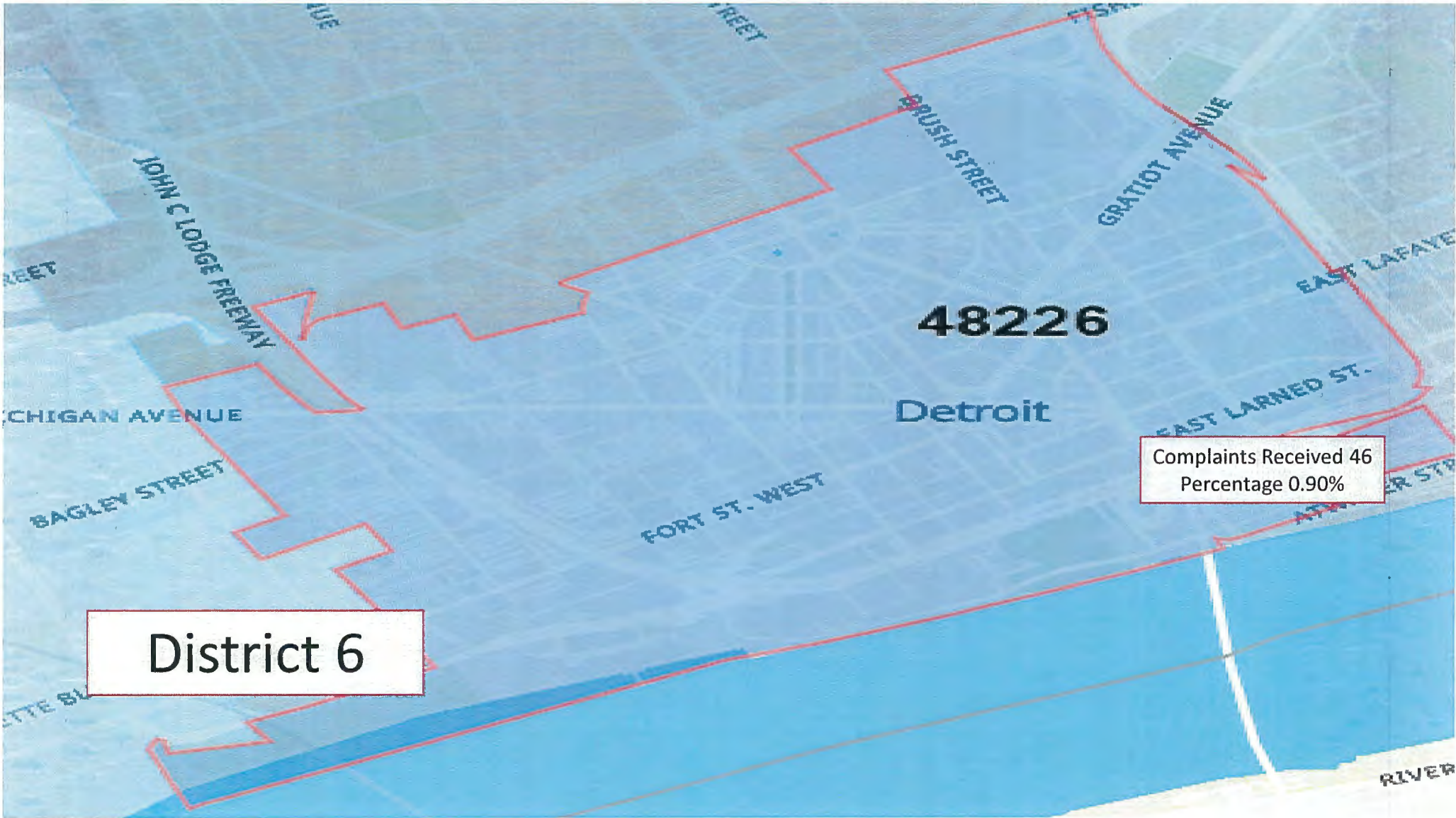
Complaints Received 132  
Percentage 2.60%

# District 4

Complaints received 297  
Percentage 5.90%

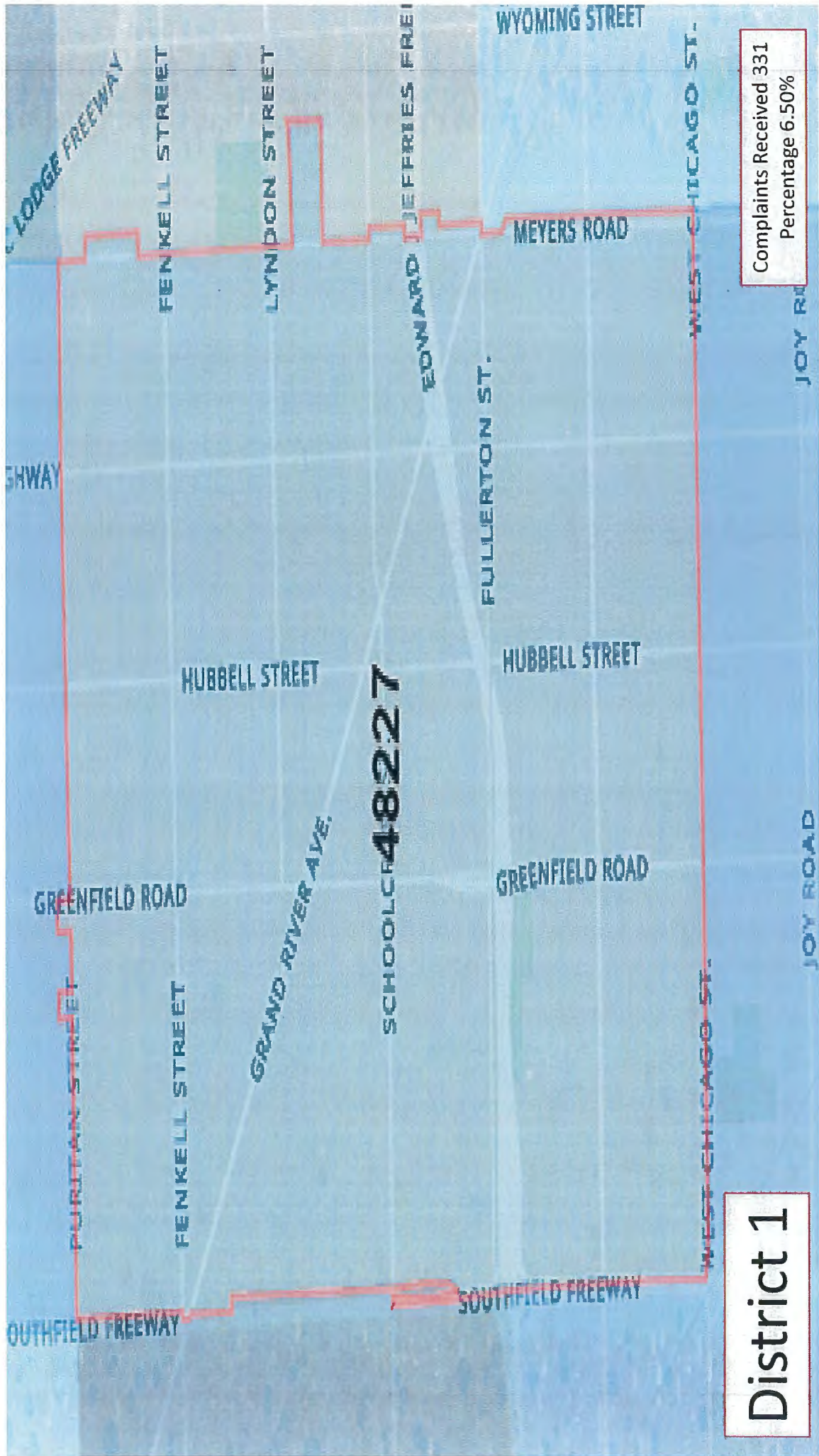
**48224**





District 6

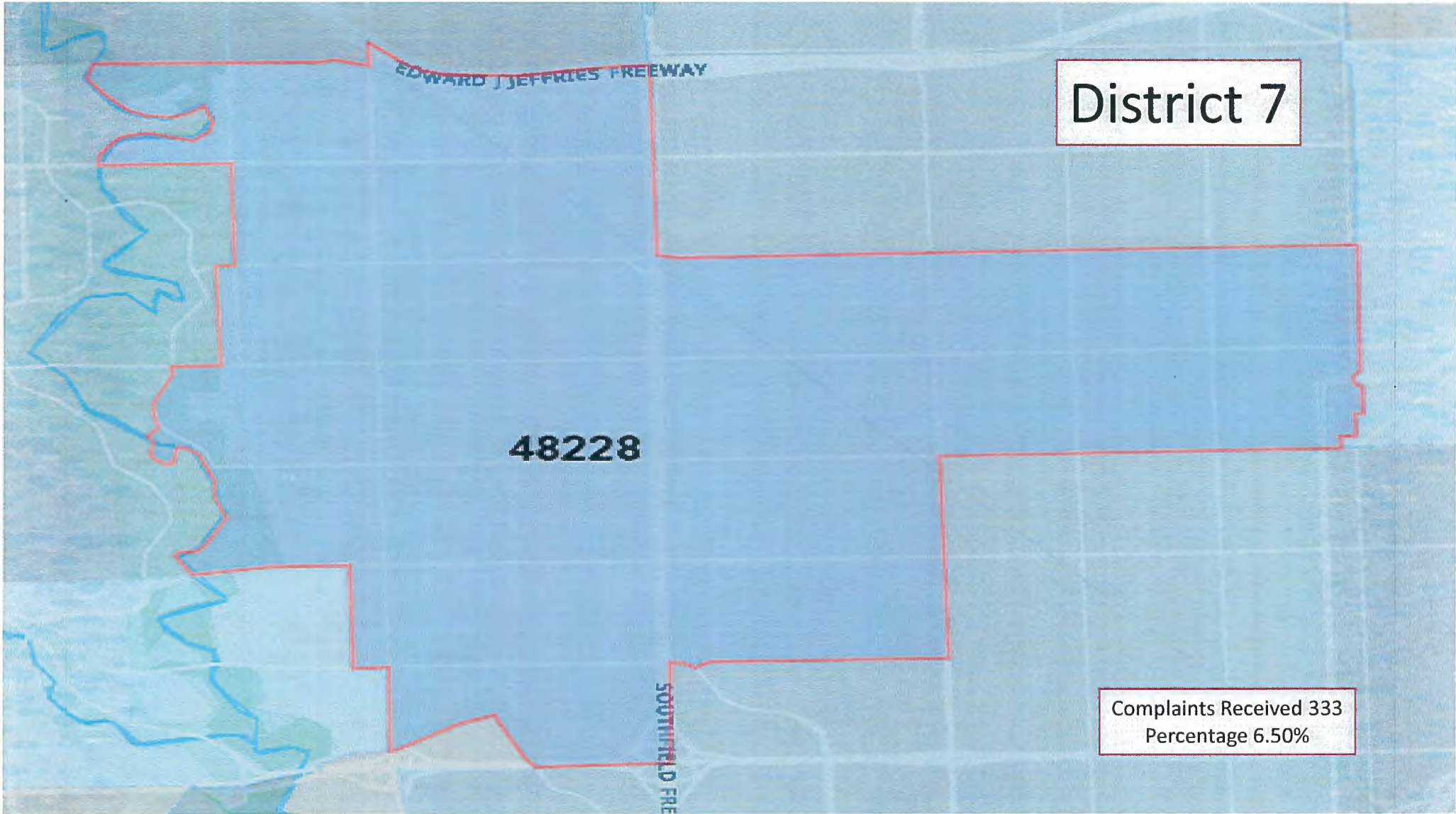
Complaints Received 46  
Percentage 0.90%



**District 1**

Complaints Received 331  
Percentage 6.50%

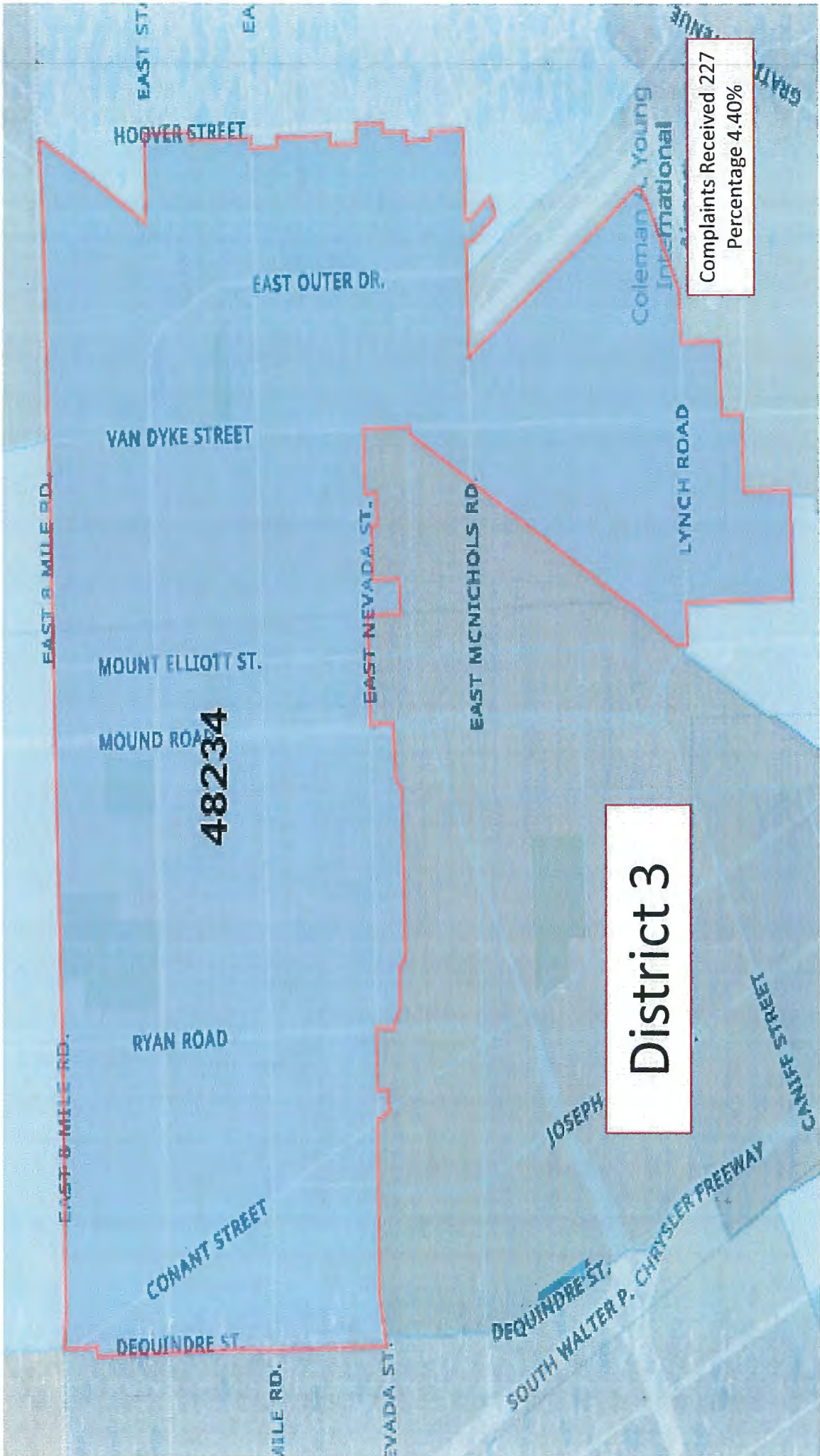




District 7

48228

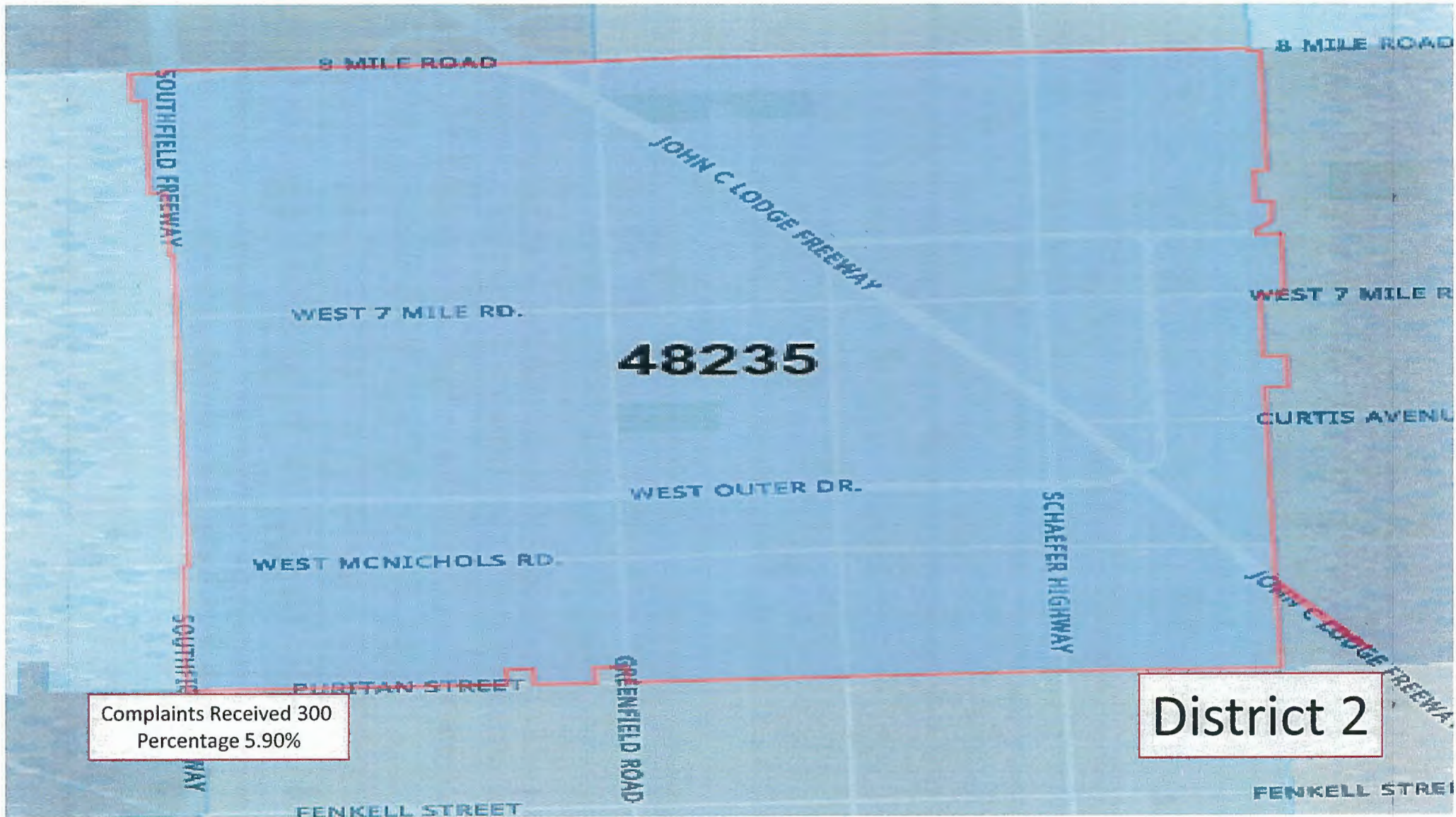
Complaints Received 333  
Percentage 6.50%



48234

District 3

Complaints Received 227  
Percentage 4.40%



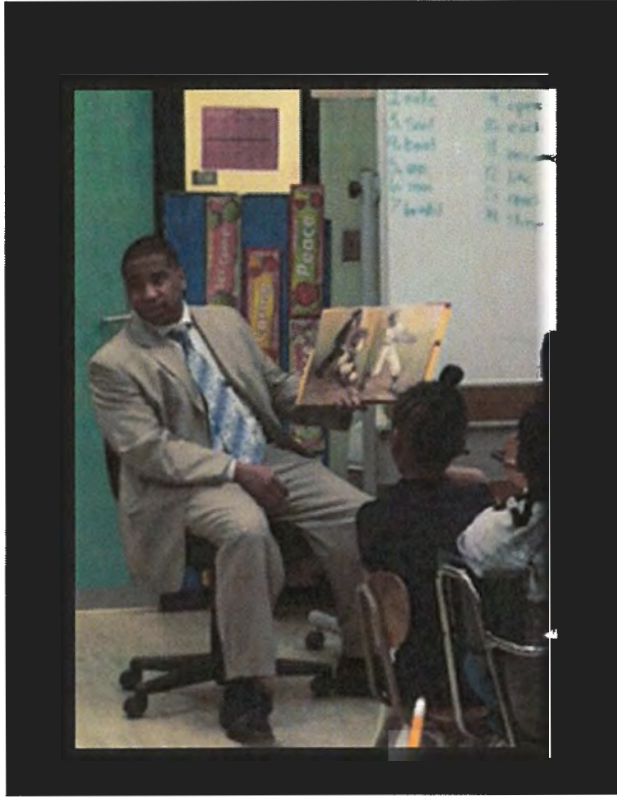
Complaints Received 464  
Percentage 9.00%

# District 7



**Community**

**Outreach**



**Mason Elementary/Middle Academy**

**1955 Fenelon St.**

**Detroit, Michigan**

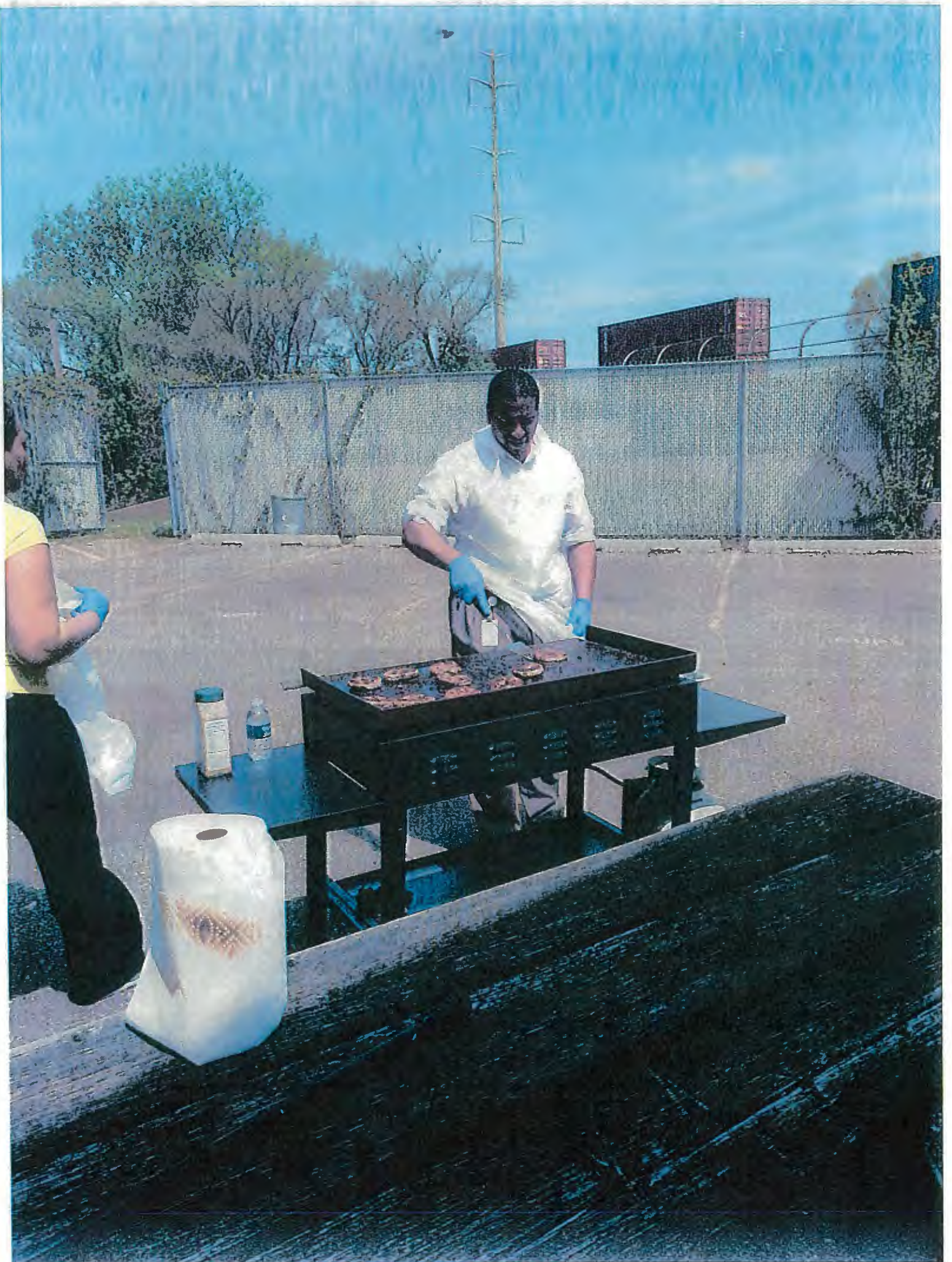
**Ms. Omega Mostyn, Principal**



**Celebrate National Reading Month With Us...**

**REAL Men Read Day**

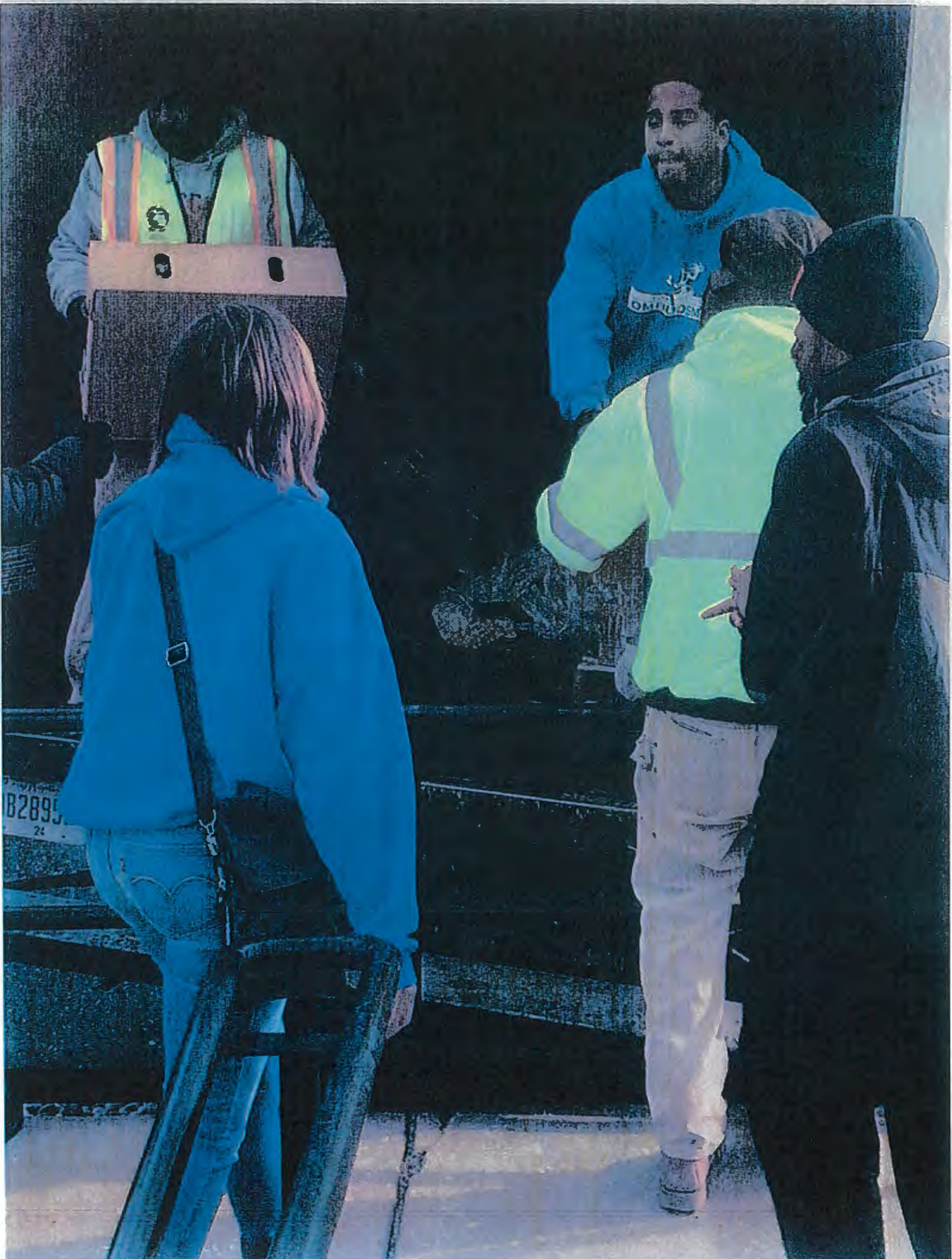










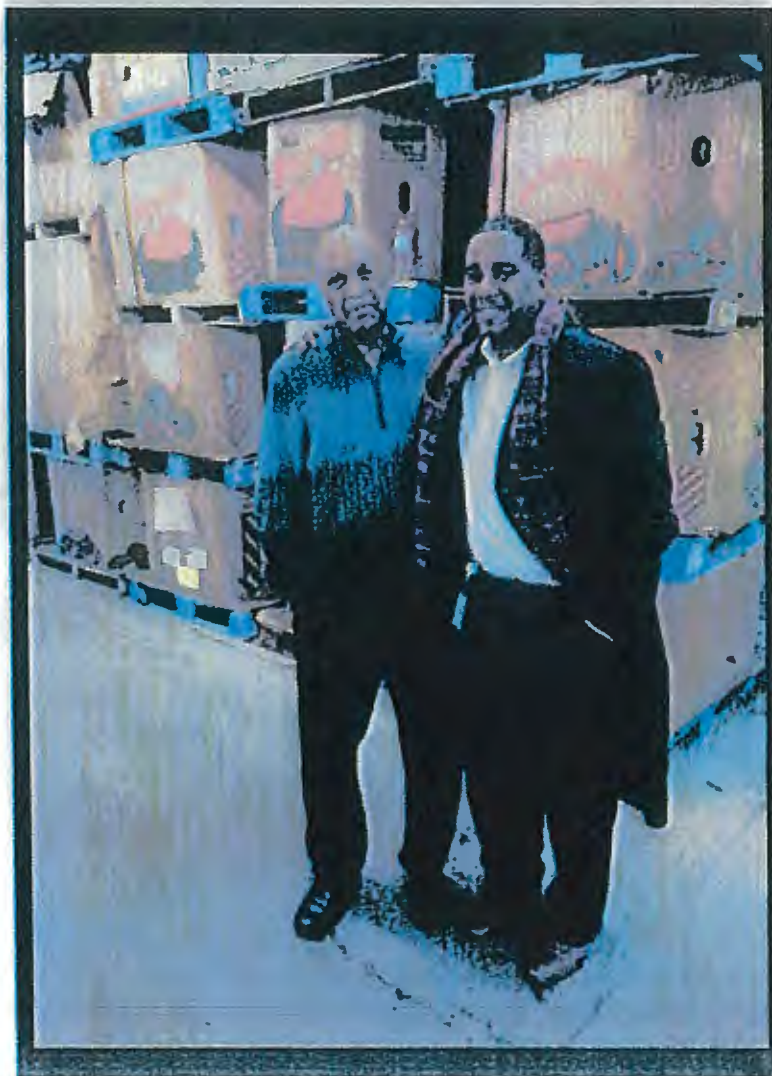




IT'S THE GREAT PUMPKIN

POTATO

JIF 6 LB CLUB SIZE 2.45 OZ JARS











Alphabet chart with letters and corresponding images:

Aa	Bb	Cc	Dd	Ee	Ff	Gg	Hh	Ii	Jj	Kk	Ll	Mm	Nn	Oo
Apple	Banana	Car	Dinosaur	Egg	Fish	Guitar	Horse	Ice cream cone	Jellyfish	Kite	Lemon	Milk carton	Nose	Orange

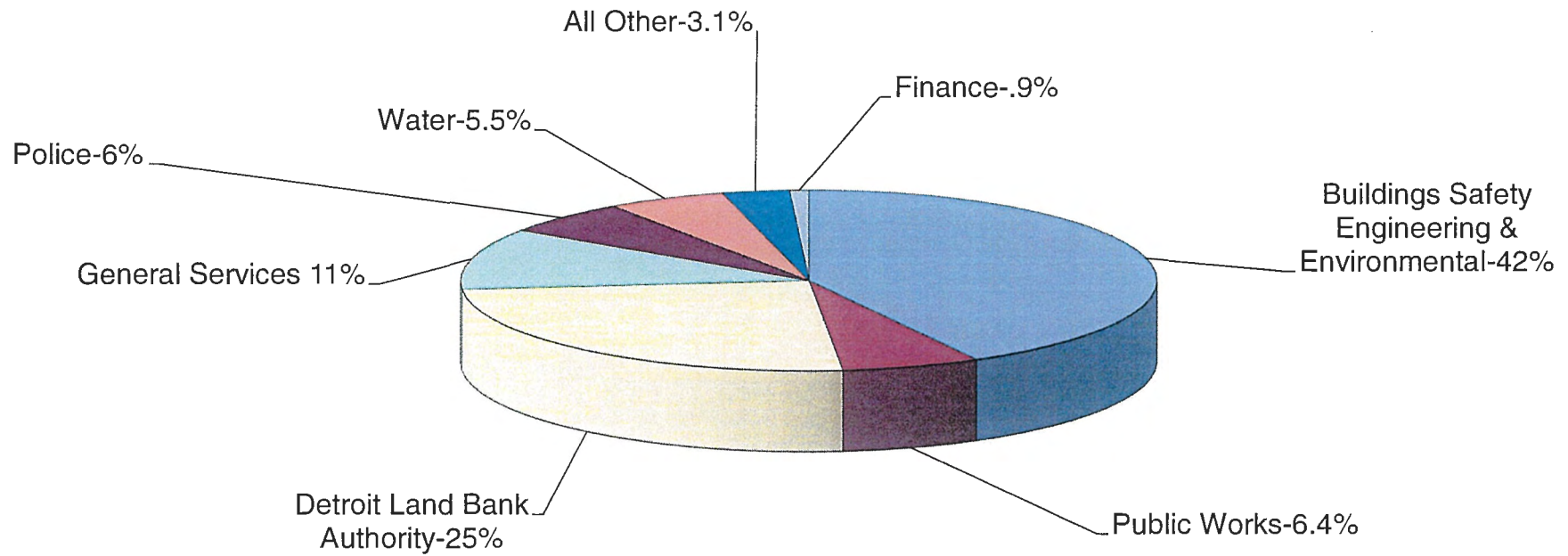
5.15 - 5.30



JUST



## Ombudsman Complaints by Department



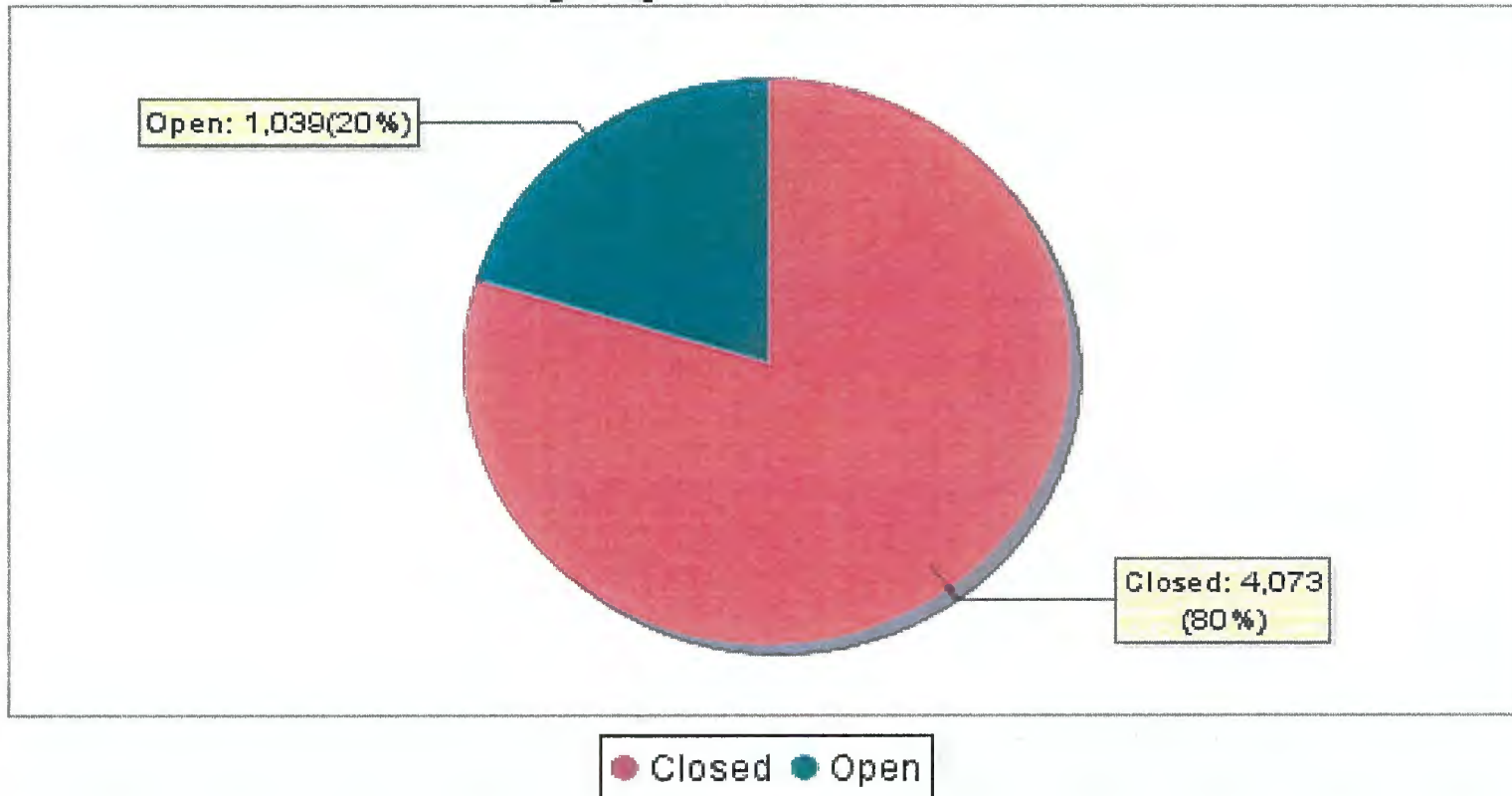
“All Other” represents several departments with less than two percent of the total complaints and as a result they were combined for chart clarity purposes.

Complaints by Department  
February 1, 2018 - January 31, 2019

<b>Department</b>	<b>Complaints</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
BSEED	2142	42%
Elections	2	0.09%
Finance	46	0.90%
Fire	12	0.09%
General Services	554	11.00%
Health	30	0.35%
Human Resources	5	0.16%
Law	10	0.11%
Municipal Parking	14	0.23%
Non Departmental & Non Jurisdictional	26	0.65%
P&DD	3	0.20%
Police	302	6.50%
PLD	44	0.90%
Public Works	326	6.40%
Recreation	1	0.18%
DDOT (Transportation)	24	0.38%
DWSD (Water & Sewerage)	283	5.50%
DLBA	1257	25.00%
Other	158	3.10%
TOTAL		

## Cases by Opened and Closed

### By Open vs Closed







*Thank You!*

*Office of the*

*Ombudsman*

On behalf of Pathways to Potential and Golightly Education Center we want to say...



For making our Resource Fair a hit!!!



# CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION


AWARDED TO

**BRUCE SIMPSON**

City of Detroit Ombudsman

We couldn't do it without you!

Awarded this January 12, 2019

 Linell M Beck President

COLLINGHAM ALLIANCE BLOCK CLUB



# Thank You!

Davison Elementary / Pathways to Potential

*City Ombudsman / Bruce Simpson*

Sponsor

*D. Vary*

Signature

*June 20, 2018*

Date





# THURGOOD MARSHALL SCHOOL

STUDENTS RISE. WE ALL RISE

SHARON E. LEE, PRINCIPAL  
LOUIS CARTER, ASST. PRINCIPAL  
RAMOND CARTER, DEAN OF CULTURE



## REAL MEN READ CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

### BRUCE SIMPSON



*Sharon E. Lee*

SIGNATURE

3-13-19

DATE



May 10, 2018

City of Detroit  
Ombudsman Office

Dear Ms. Clay

Thank you so much for your help with the tree trimming on the side of my house. I live on a corner and the tree is in such bad shape I am afraid it will either fall on a kid while walking to school or on my home.

You were very courteous and professional. I really appreciate your assistance.

Carol Adams

Resident  
19970 Conley  
Detroit, MI 48234

Dear Anna Ferrante,  
Thank you so  
much for your patience  
in helping me in my  
recent tax misunderstanding.  
You were a tremendous  
burden lifter. 😊

Thanks

Georgia  
L. M. Pitt

# CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

*This certifies that  
Bruce Simpson*

*Participated in REAL Men Read Day  
In celebration of National Reading Month!*



*Mason Elementary/Middle School  
Detroit, Michigan*



*Omega Mostyn  
Principal*

*Alma Greer  
LOL Founder*

*In Partnership with Legacy of Literacy, Inc.*

Hi Mrs. Barnard

I wanted to say thank you for helping my family in such a difficult time. After I contacted you, I received confirmation that the final report had been completed and I was able to move forward with the insurance claim. Thank you so so much for your assistance.

All the best.

R. Walton  
Pathways to Potential  
Onsite at  
Detroit Innovation Academy  
&  
Edison Elementary  
313 510-5476



*Carmen Wells*  
Oct. 29, 2018

Dear Ms Ferrante  
Thank you so much  
for your quick  
respond to my concern  
So far so good.  
Sincerely,

*Carmen D. Brown Wells*

Miss Gail Bernard:

Truly, you are God Sent.

I had a mass situation of tree limbs  
in the telegraph wires behind my  
home. I didn't get help by  
contacting DTE energy. But Miss  
Bernard stepped in and stepped up  
and now the tree limb problem  
is solved. They did a great job  
today. Thank you, most kindly  
from the bottom of my heart.

I will never forget you  
this is the second time you  
showed up for me as you did  
before. your work is awesome.

Thank you kindly

[Redacted signature]

