Notes on Software for the Austin Gerrymandering Workshop February 1 & 2 Mapmaking Sessions

(Products listed in the order they appear in the schedule)

Please note that QGIS (#2, below) is the only required install to participate in the hands-on sessions. All the other tools can run in a browser, but browser compatibility varies, so if you want to try them out, or use them as an alternative, we recommend checking your browser versions and plug-ins.

1. For the GIS material she'll be covering, Anita Palmer recommends using the latest version of Firefox.

2. The hands-on breakout sessions will use QGIS, a free, open source, robust, cross-platform GIS that participants will need to have downloaded and installed on their own computers:

- There's a good installation how-to document at https://arset.gsfc.nasa.gov/sites/default/files/disasters/SAR-17/Introduction%20to%20QGIS.pdf
- One extra note for Mac users: be sure to read and follow the instructions on the KyngChaos QGIS download page as well as the ones in the "Read Me" document.
- QGIS provides an extensive array of tools, but does not include specific redistricting functionality.

3. Azavea, the creators of the DistrictBuilder web-based, open source software for collaborative redistricting, also recommend the latest version of Firefox running on a Mac as the best option, but the current Firefox running on Windows should work as well.

4. Dave's Redistricting App (DRA) is a free, easy-to-use web application first created in 2011 that uses the Microsoft Silverlight plugin, which is no longer supported by some browsers. As such:

- On Windows, the browsers to use are Internet Explorer, and Firefox ESR (not Firefox 52 or above).
- On MacOS, best results are with Safari or Firefox ESR, and on El Capitan or earlier versions of the operating system. Folks with Sierra or later may experience problems.
- Launching the app will request the plugin download if you don't already have it.

5. The Python presentation, and subsequent breakout session(s), will be using the Python console that comes included with a standard QGIS installation (see #2). Mary Barker will be providing some of her own Python libraries for working with shapefiles.

6. Maptitude for Redistricting is a professional-grade redistricting application, which is available in both a Windows desktop product, and an online product (called Maptitude Online Redistricting), both of which will be presented.

- The break-out sessions for this software will be held in a computer lab, so participants will not be expected to use the applications on their own personal devices.
- For those who are interested, Caliper (the company that makes Maptitude) does recommend Firefox Quantum as a browser for their online product.