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## Voters' Choice 11/14

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# Periodic Atlas of the Metroscope

## Voters' Choice 11/14

by Sheila Martin, Meg Merrick, Richard Clucas, and Carolyn N. Long

Voters often ignore midterm elections; November 2014 was no exception. Nationwide, voter turnout, at 36.3 percent, was the lowest in 72 years, according to the United States Elections Project.

But in Oregon and Clark County, Washington, a governor's race, a senate race, several interesting ballot measures, and a change in the Clark County charter upped the turnout to 51 percent.

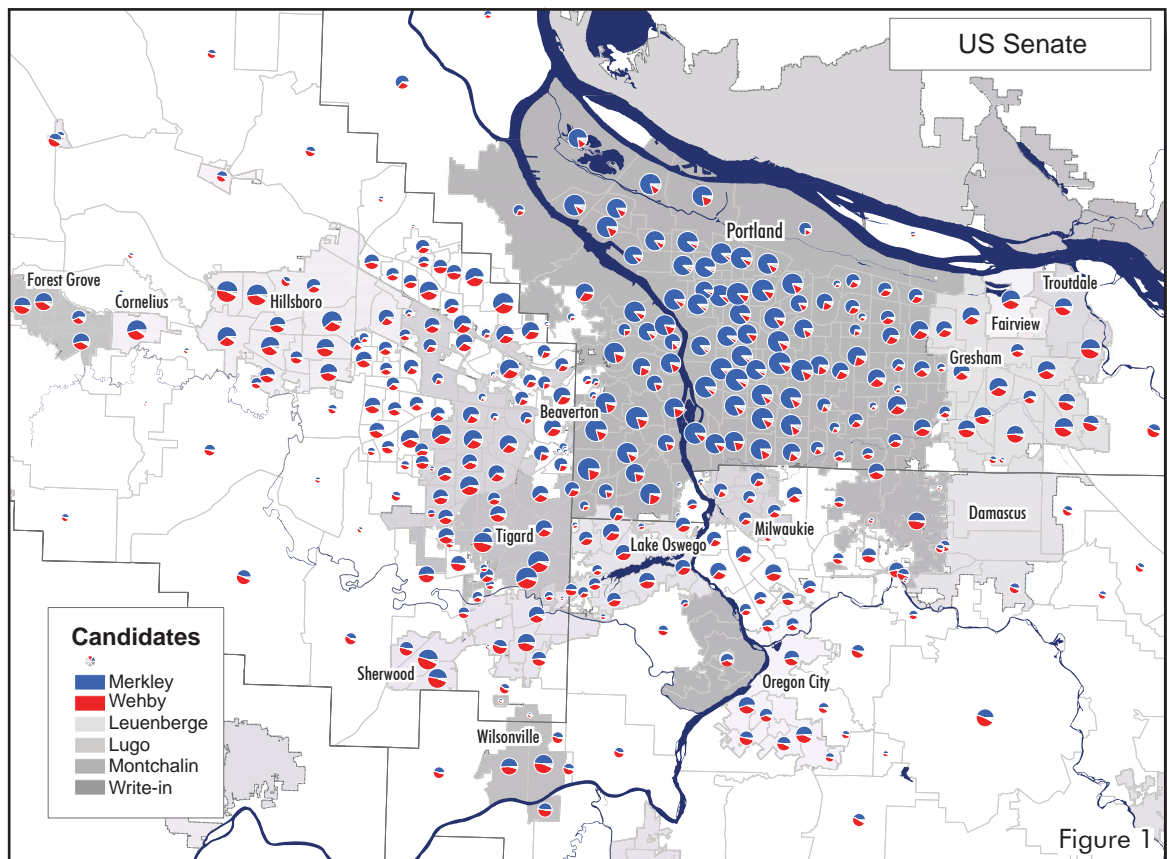
While *Metroscope* readers prefer to view the region as integrated and interdependent, we are challenged to take a regional view when it comes to elections. Voters in each jurisdiction receive different ballots, consider different candidates, ponder different ballot measures, and even face different voting procedures, de-

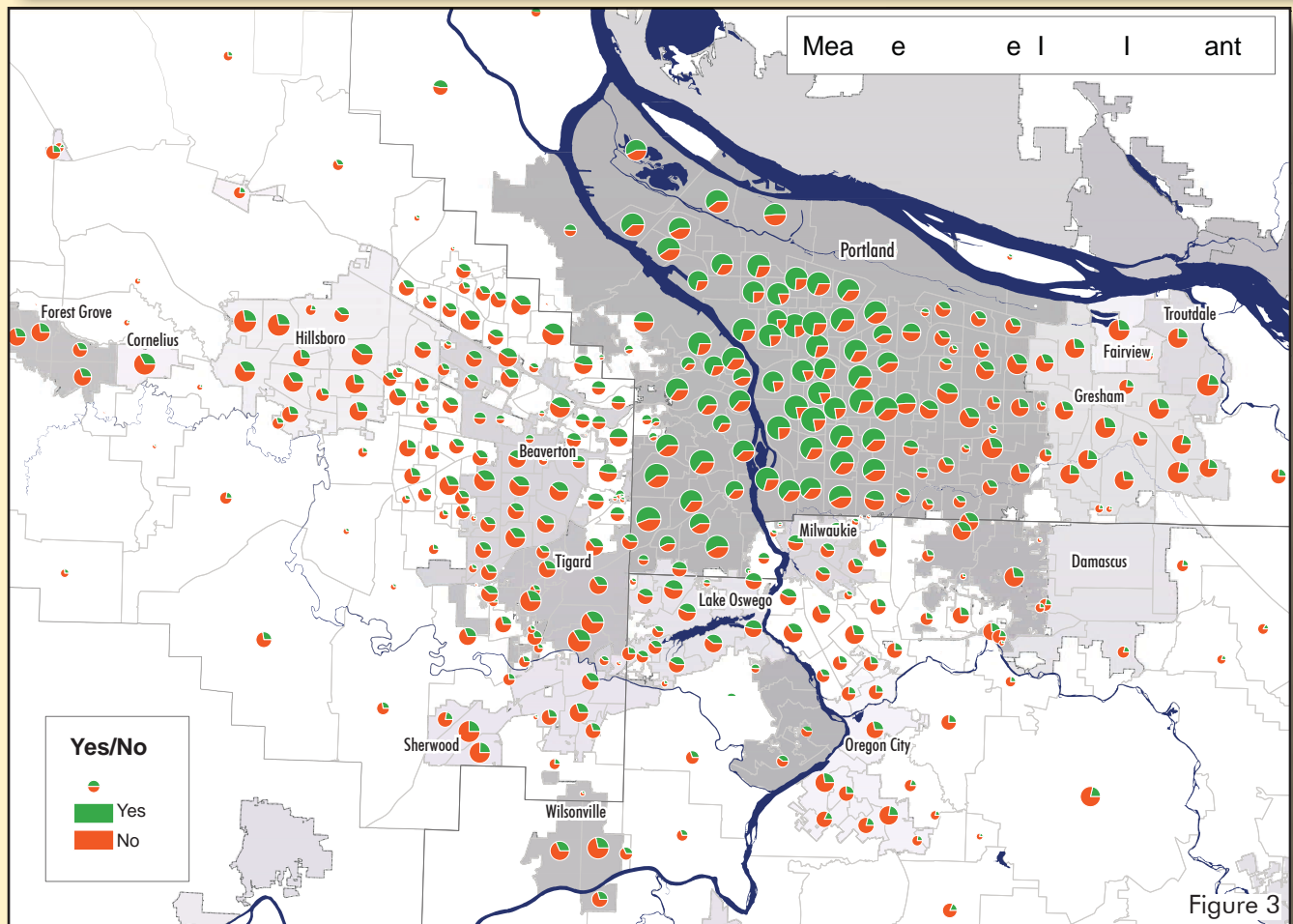
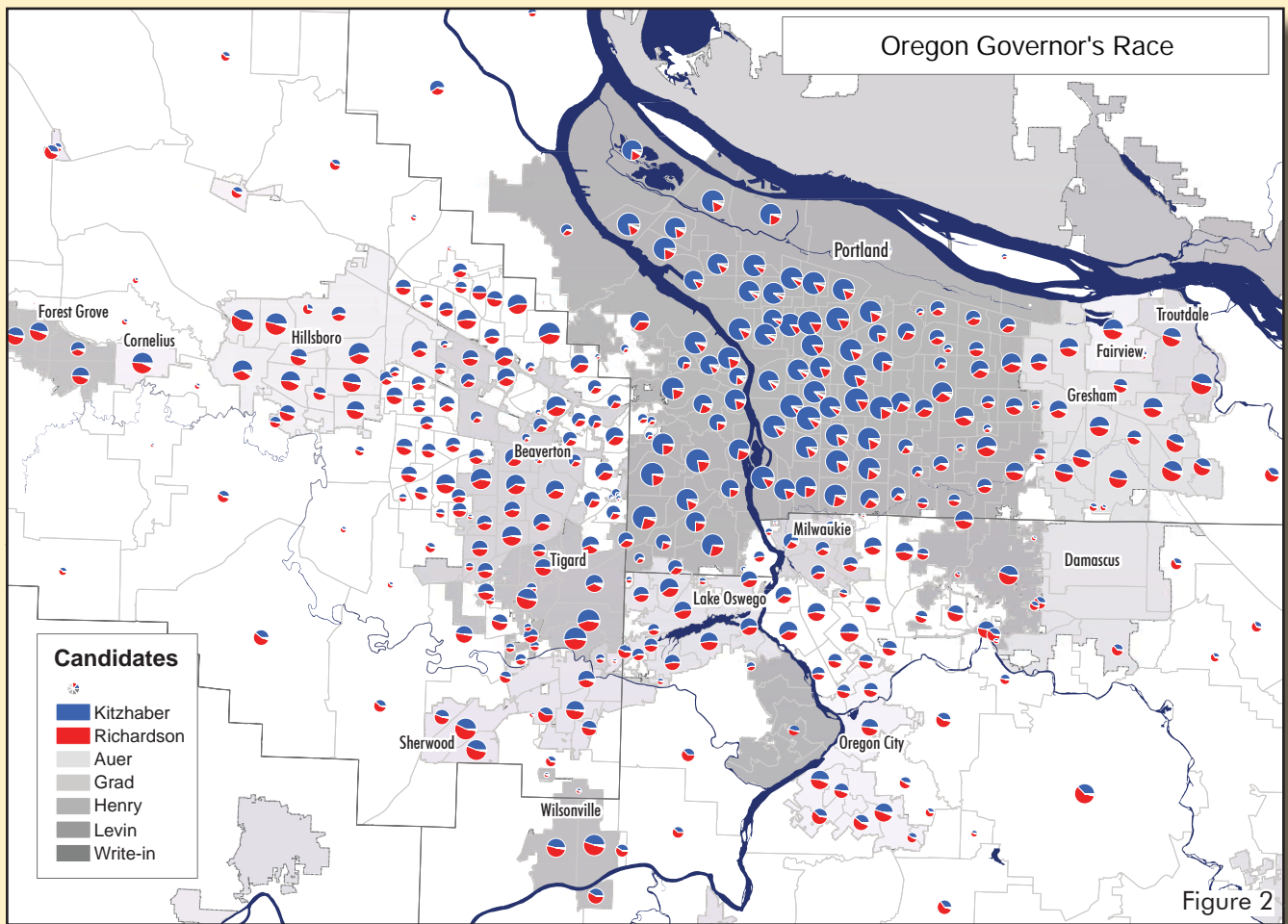
pending on which side of the Columbia River they inhabit.

This version of the Atlas considers the results of the November 2014 elections for some key races and initiatives in Oregon and, separately, some of the important issues faced by voters in Clark County. The maps show precinct-level results; the circles within each precinct show the distribution of the vote within that precinct.

### Oregon Statewide Elected Offices

Statewide, Senator Jeff Merkley secured 55.7 percent of the vote while Governor Kitzhaber captured 50.2 percent, according to the Oregon Secretary of State. This relatively small difference is visible in the metropolitan





voting patterns shown in figures 1 and 2. As expected, areas voting most strongly Democratic are in the inner southeast and northeast Portland—neighborhoods that have become more reliably Democratic over the past decade. Areas farther east and west demonstrate a more conservative voting pattern.

This pattern is consistent with recent political science research that suggests that suburbs have become important battlegrounds in which elections are won and lost. With rural areas largely conservative and cities overwhelmingly liberal, the suburban voters have become the deciders in many elections.

In looking at Oregon's recent senatorial and gubernatorial races, Senator Merkley had stronger support in suburban counties than did Kitzhaber. And while Monica Wehby failed to attract a majority of voters in any of the metropolitan counties, Dennis Richardson's bid for Governor did draw a majority in Yamhill and an even 50 percent in Clackamas and Columbia counties.

### Measure 88: Oregon Alternative Driver Licenses Referendum

Measure 88 would have offered residents an opportunity to obtain a driver's card without requiring proof of legal residence in the United States. Statewide, the measure failed, with 66 percent voting "no." Figure 3 indicates strong support in the liberal central precincts. Interestingly, there appears to be strong opposition in places such as Gresham, Cornelius, and Forest Grove that have relatively large Hispanic populations. Of course, many of those who would have been most affected by the measure cannot vote.

### Measure 90: Oregon Open Primary Initiative

Had it passed, Measure 90 would have created a top-two system of general election voting, in which all voters would receive the same primary ballot that includes all candidates, regardless of political party. Candidates would have been identified on these ballots with their party registration and status of party endorsement. The top two candidates, regardless of political party, would run in the general election.

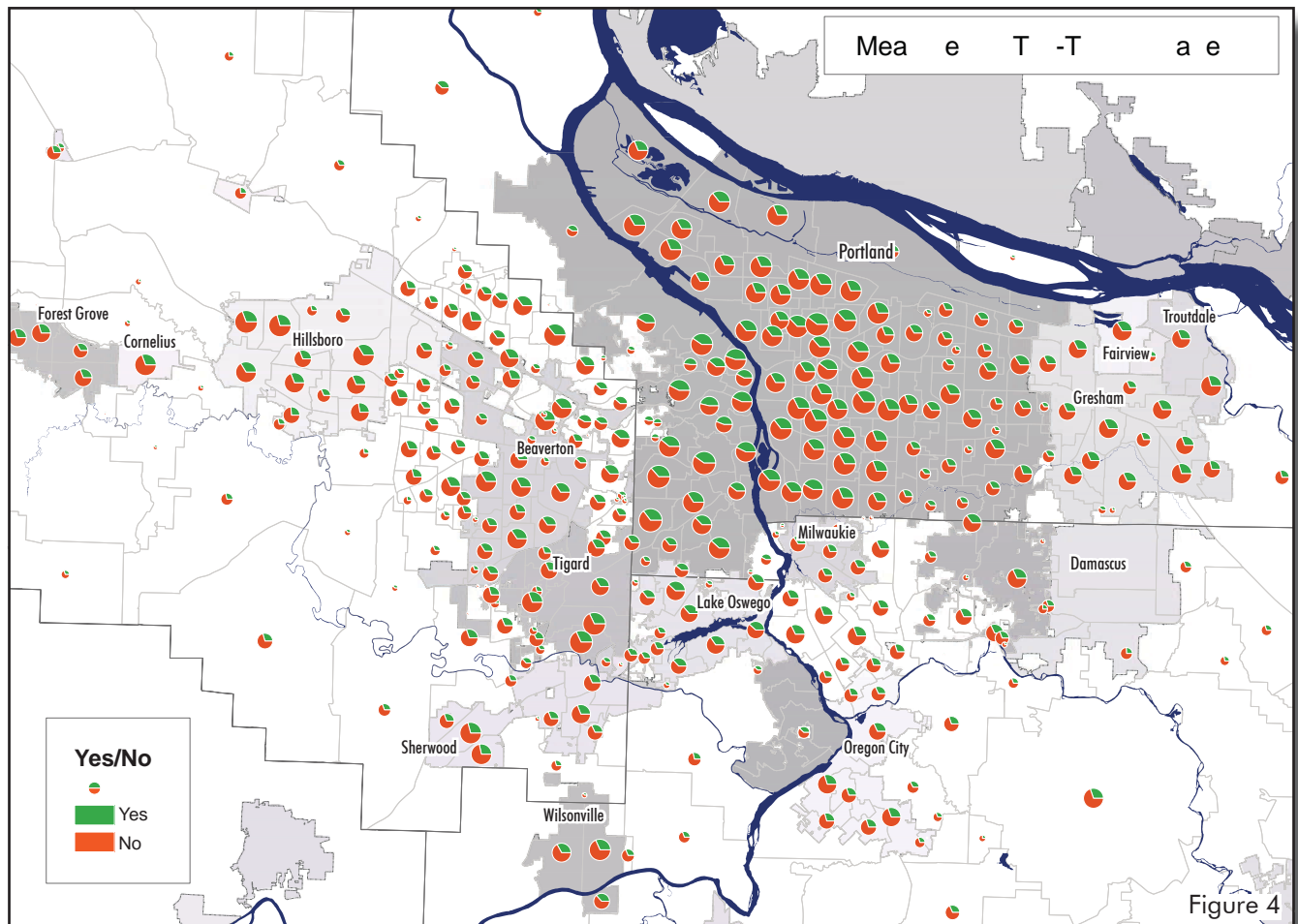
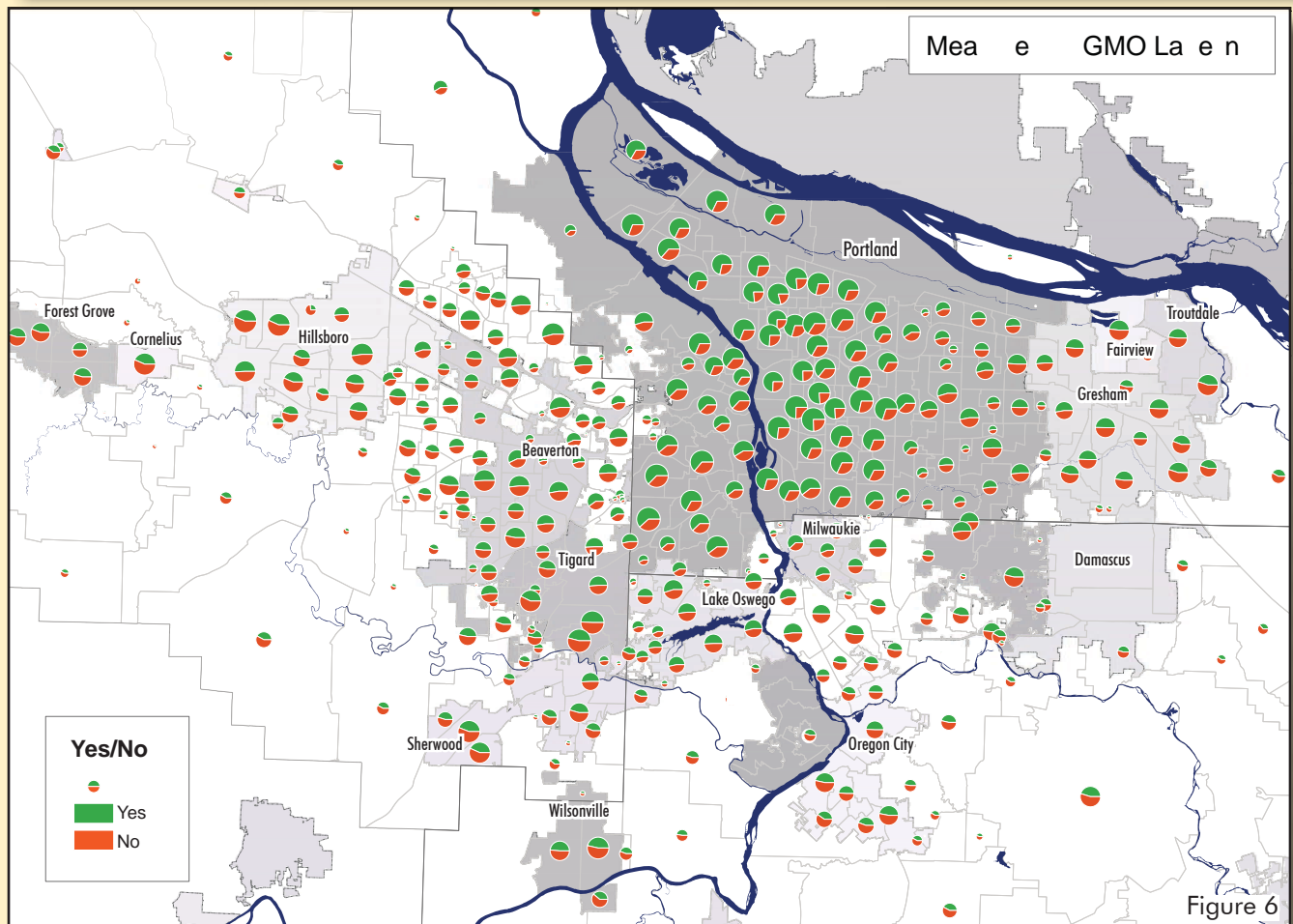
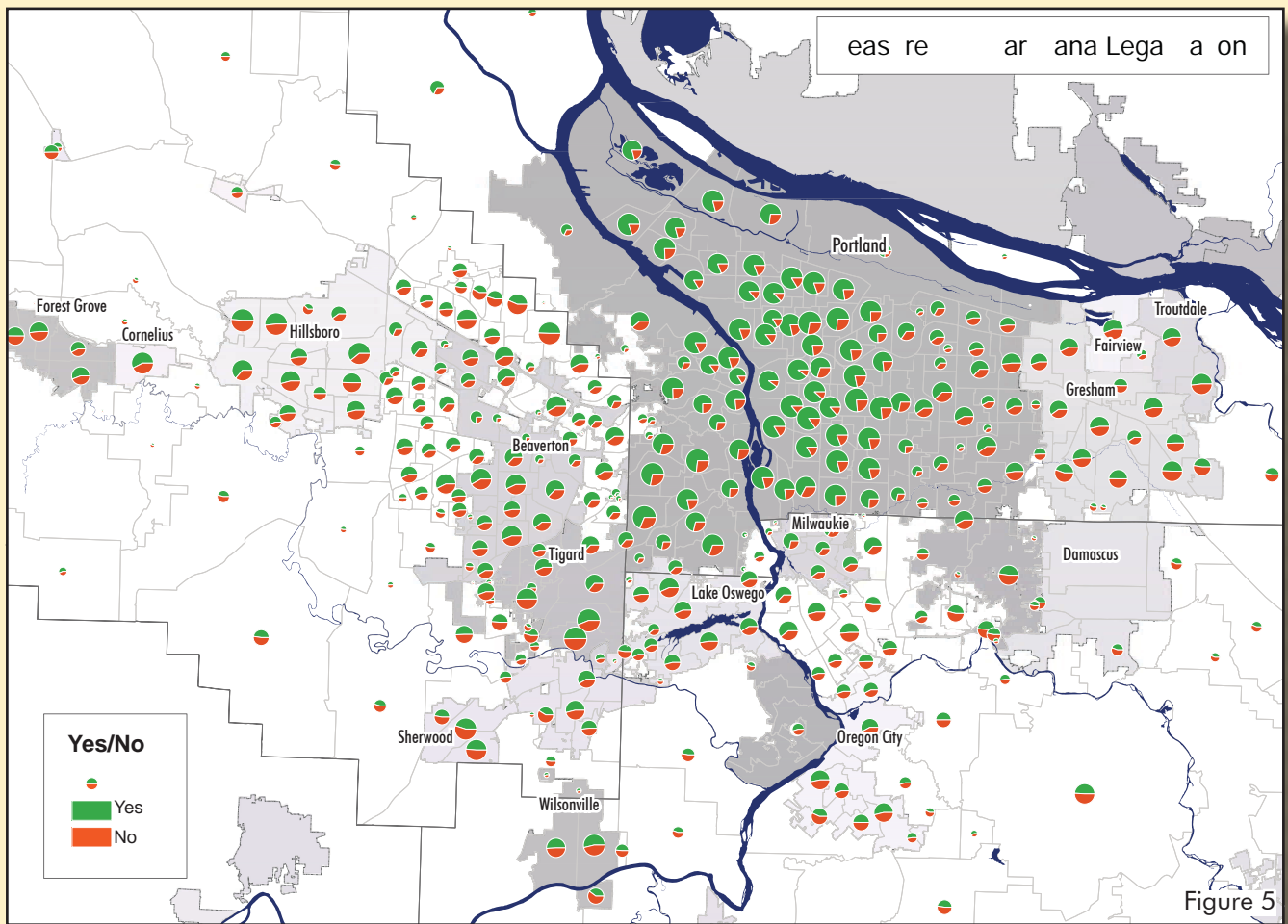


Figure 4



Measure 90 lost, with 68 percent of voters—state-wide—voting “no.” The vote was strongly negative throughout the metropolitan area, demonstrating that many people questioned the need for this type of change in our voting system. Interestingly, the greatest support for the measure appears to be in Portland's affluent West Hills.

### Measure 91: Oregon Legalized Marijuana Initiative

Measure 91 legalizes recreational marijuana use for people aged 21 and older. The measure allows adults to possess up to eight ounces of dried marijuana and up to four plants. It also authorizes in-state manufacturing, processing, and sale by and to adults. It gives the Oregon Liquor Control Commission the responsibility of regulating sales, and it provides for the taxation of producers. Proceeds are to be distributed to schools, mental health and drug treatment services, state police, local law enforcement, and the Oregon Health Authority.

Measure 91 was approved, with 56 percent of the vote statewide, and passed overwhelmingly in the central city precincts on both sides of the Willamette. Opposition was more significant in the outlying, more conservative precincts.

### Measure 92, Oregon Mandatory Labeling of GMOs Initiative

Had it passed, Measure 92 would have mandated labeling of foods that are produced with or contain genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

The measure was very narrowly defeated in the initial count by 802 votes, triggering an automatic recount. The recount showed the measure defeated by 837 votes—still an incredibly close contest. The results don't follow the voting pattern typical of measures considered “liberal”; some traditionally liberal voters could have been concerned about the potential impacts of pricing on low-income residents.

### Metro Charter Measure 26-160

This measure retains a provision in the Metro Charter prohibiting it from requiring local governments to increase density in single-family neighborhoods.

The measure passed overwhelmingly, even in the region's most liberal precincts. The 94 percent “yes” vote seems to reflect voters' general preference for local control regarding land-use issues.

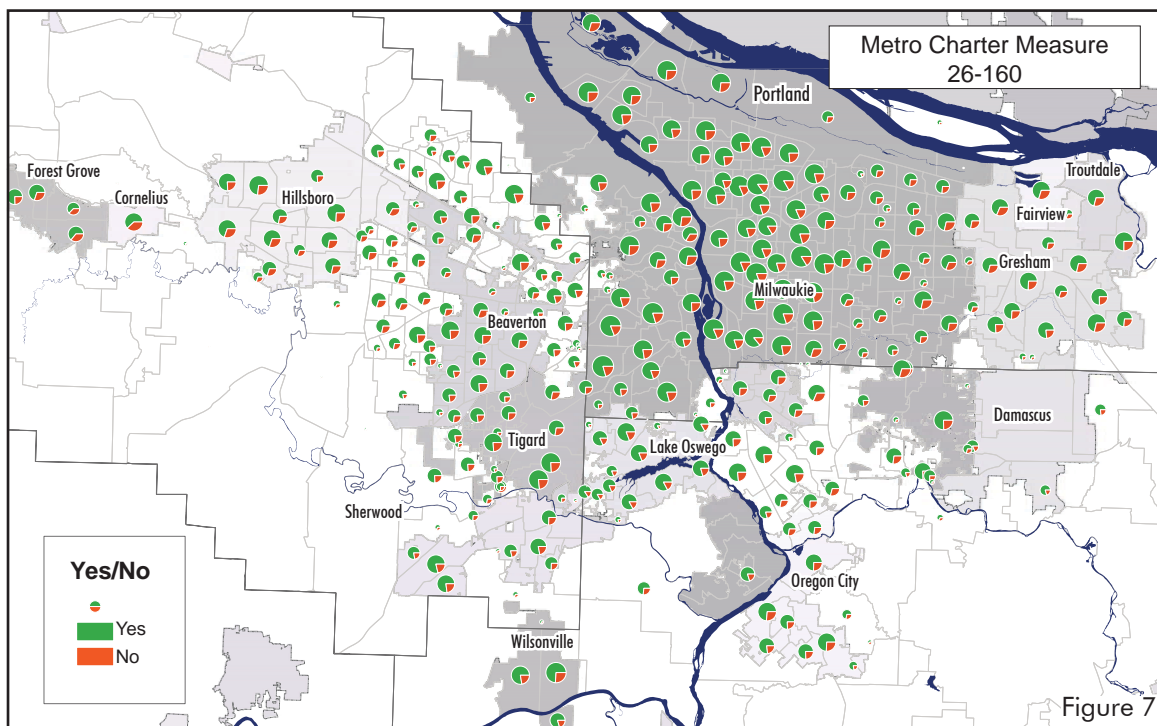
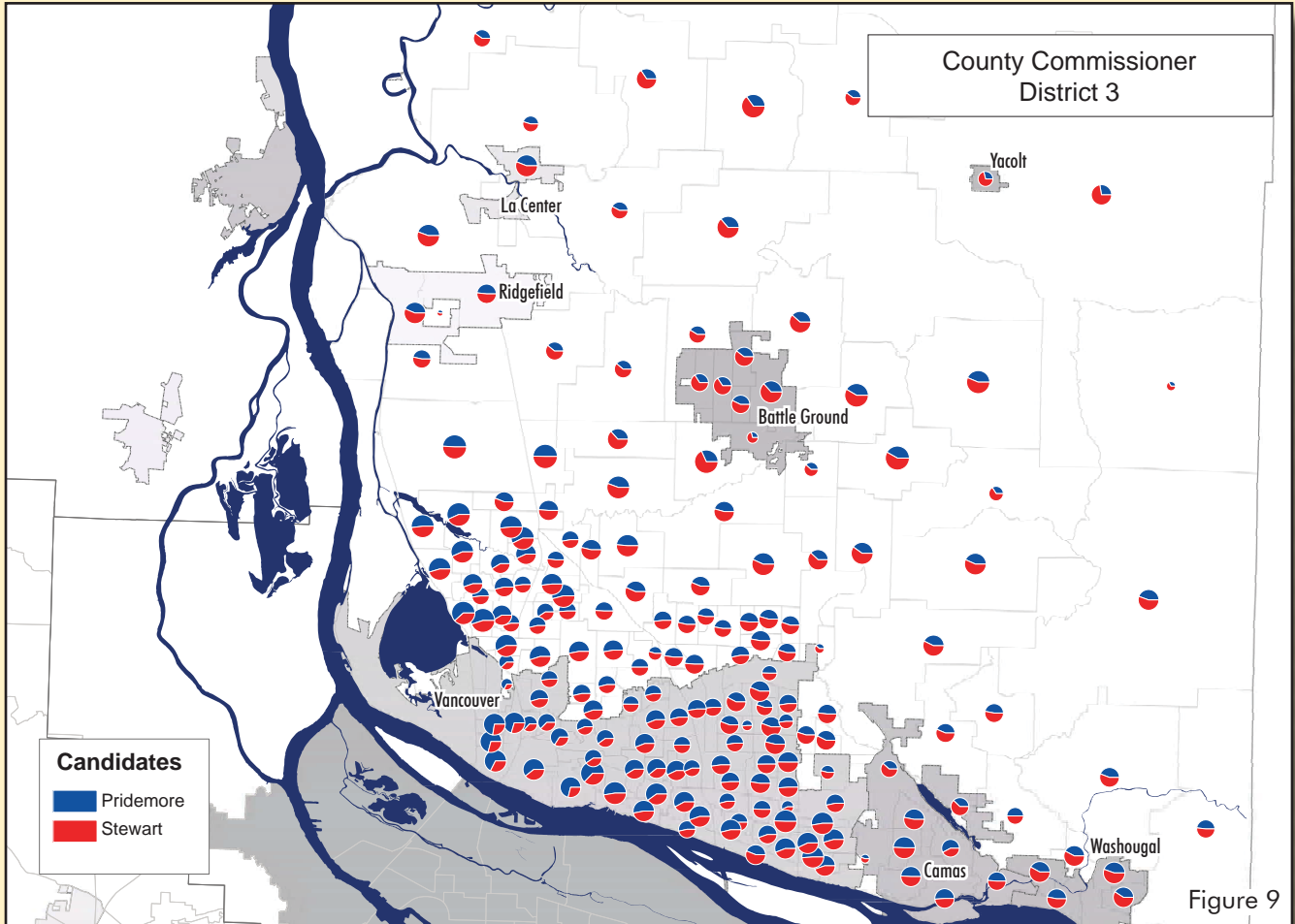
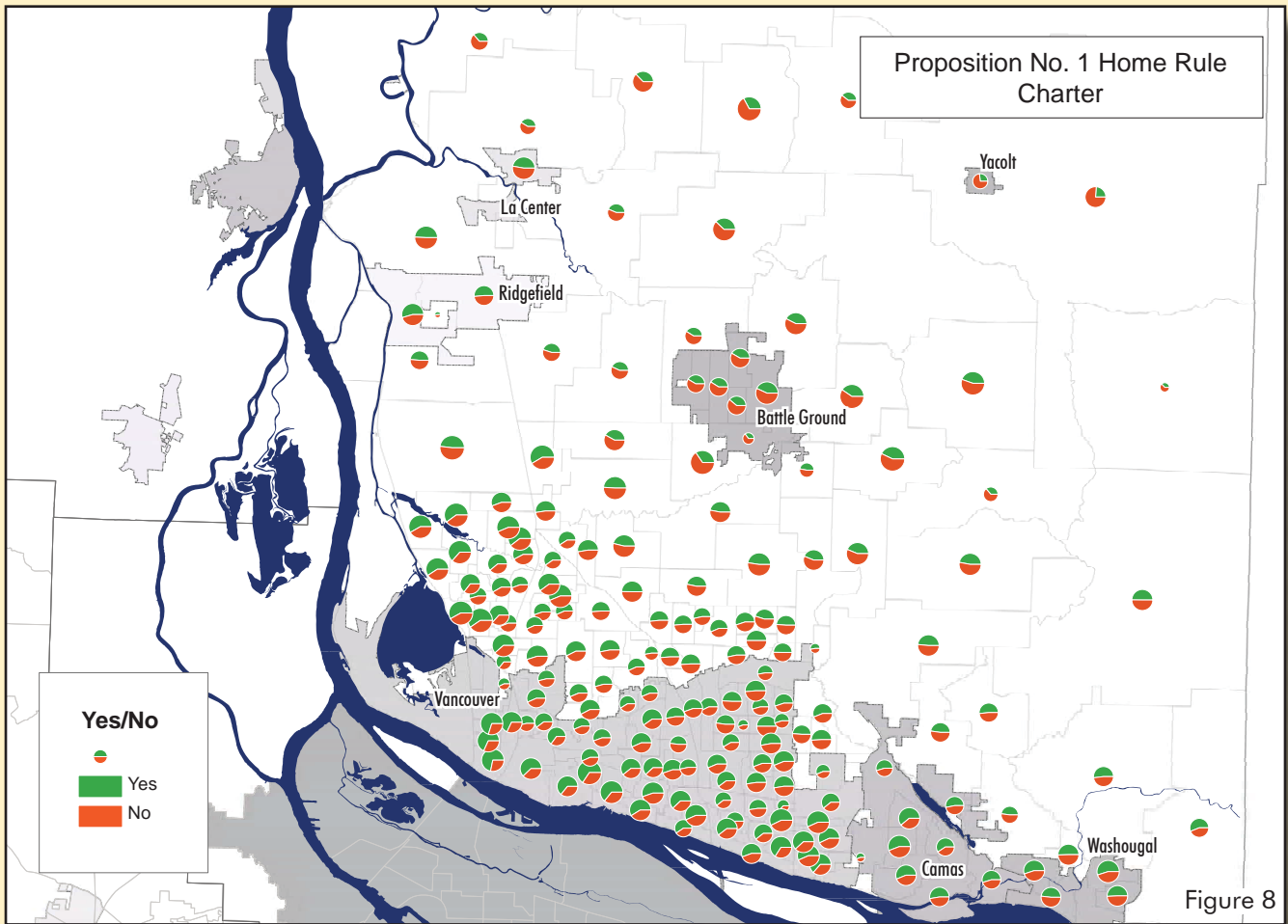


Figure 7



## Clark County

### Proposition No. 1 Home Rule Charter

The new Clark County charter replaces the three-member board of commissioners with a five-member council. It transfers supervisory authority over county employees, except employees of other elected officials, to an appointed county manager. The council will be elected by district, except the chair, who will be elected at large. The charter also adds provisions for initiatives and referendums. The charter passed, with 53 percent of the vote, and had bipartisan support.

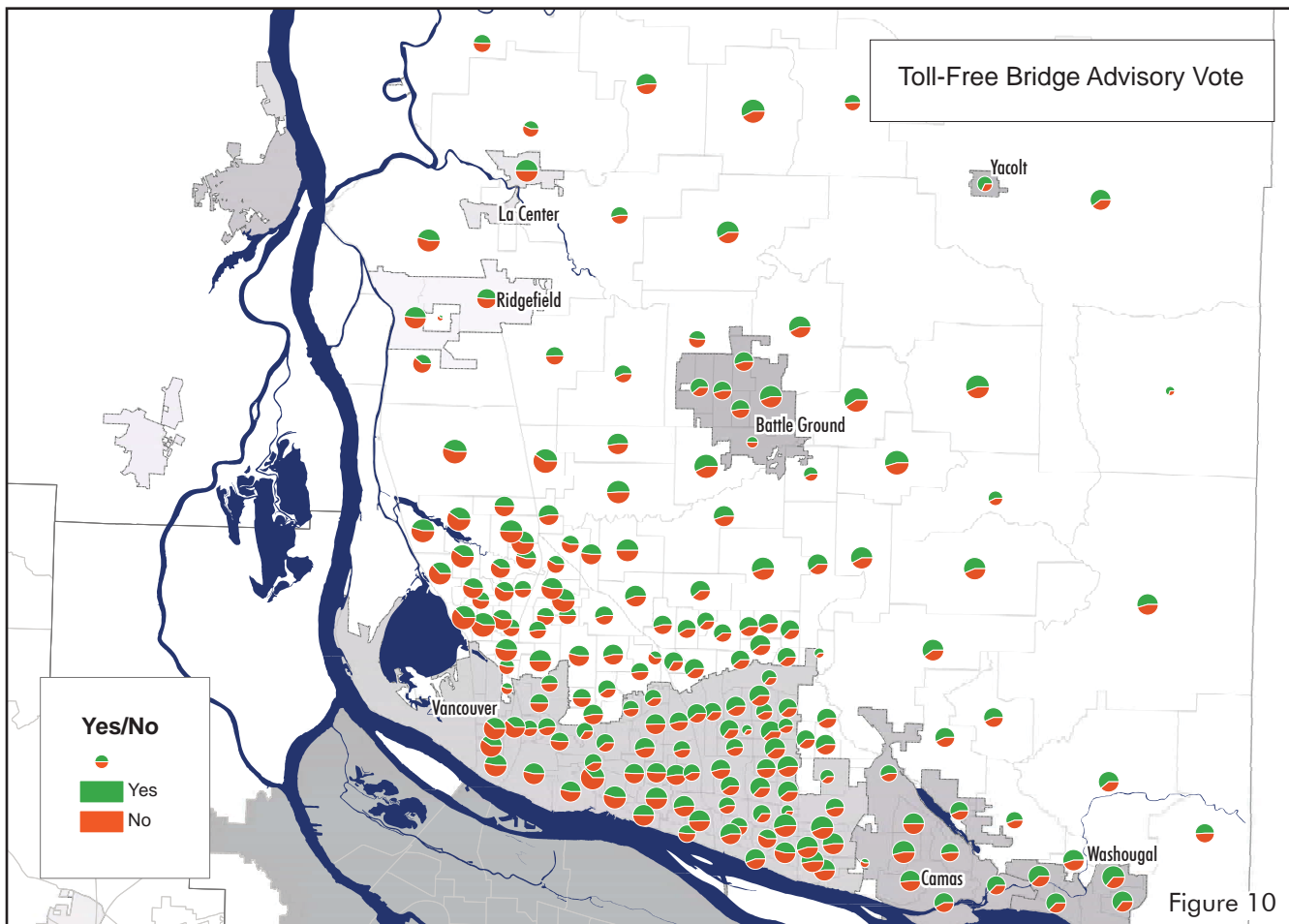
### Clark County Commissioner District 3

Republican Jeanne Stewart was elected over Democrat Craig Pridemore with just over 50 percent of the vote—a difference of only 905 votes. Not surprisingly, Pridemore had strong support in the precincts within the City of Vancouver, while Stewart had stronger support in the eastern and northern, more rural, areas of Clark County.

### Toll-Free Bridge Advisory Vote

This advisory vote asked voters whether the Clark County Commission should support and pursue a toll-free East County bridge across the Columbia River from SR-14 at 192nd to Airport Way in Oregon. It passed, with nearly 53 percent of the vote.

These results represent a four-point drop from the 2012 East County bridge advisory vote. The vote tended to be more strongly “no” in some Vancouver precincts and more strongly “yes” in some Washougal precincts, rural north Clark County, and Battle Ground.





### Initiative 594 Universal Background Checks for Gun Purchases

Measure 594 extends background checks, currently required for firearm sales by licensed dealers, to all firearm sales and transfers where at least one party in the sale is in Washington. The checks would be required at gun shows, for online transactions, and between unlicensed private individuals. The requirement includes gifts or loans, but excludes gifts among family members and some other specific exceptions.

The measure passed statewide, with 59 percent of the vote, and in Clark County, with 58 percent of the vote. While it was expected that voters in urbanized precincts would generally support the measure, the “yes” votes northwest of Vancouver and in Ridgefield and La Center were less predictable.

