

**CITY OF SIMI VALLEY
MEMORANDUM**

September 27, 2021

TO: City Council

FROM: Office of the City Clerk / Office of the City Attorney

SUBJECT: FIRST PUBLIC HEARING ON THE REDISTRICTING PROCESS AND TO RECEIVE INPUT FROM THE PUBLIC FOR THE REDRAWING OF ELECTION DISTRICT BOUNDARIES

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Council take the following actions:

1. Hold a public hearing to receive public input on the composition of districts and the “communities of interest” for purposes of redrawing election district boundaries;
2. Receive a presentation from the City’s demographic consulting firm, National Demographics Corporation (NDC); and
3. Close the public hearing and set the next public hearing for November 8, 2021.

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

Every ten years, cities with by-district elections must use new census data to review and, if needed, redraw district lines to reflect how local populations have changed. The redistricting process for Simi Valley must be completed by April 17, 2022. As required by law, there are extensive opportunities for the public to provide input into the redistricting process.

FINDINGS AND ALTERNATIVES

Since the City Council’s transition to by-district elections in 2018, the State has enacted new laws governing the redistricting process, including the FAIR MAPS Act, which was adopted by the California legislature and took effect January 1, 2020. The FAIR MAPS Act contains specified criteria that must be considered in redrawing district boundaries, new requirements for public hearings, and new outreach requirements as described below.

Criteria to be Considered in the Drawing of District Maps

In accordance with the FAIR MAPS Act, the City Council shall draw and adopt boundaries using the following criteria in the listed order of priority (Elections Code 21601(b),(c):

1. Comply with the federal requirements of equal population and the Federal Voting Rights Act (FVRA)
2. Geographically contiguous
3. Undivided neighborhoods and “communities of interest” (socio-economic geographic areas that should be kept together)
4. Easily identifiable boundaries
5. Compact (do not bypass one group of people to get to a more distant group of people)
6. Shall not favor or discriminate against a political party

Once the prioritized criteria are met, other traditional districting principles can be considered, such as:

1. Minimize the number of voters delayed from voting in 2022 to 2024
2. Respect voters’ choices / continuity in office
3. Future population growth

Overview of the Process

Pursuant to Elections Code Section 21607.1, the City must hold at least four public hearings that enable community members to provide input on the drawing of district maps:

- At least one hearing must occur before the City draws draft maps
- At least two hearings must happen after the drawing of draft maps
- The fourth hearing can happen either before or after the drawing of draft maps
- City staff or consultants may hold a public workshop instead of one of the required public redistricting hearings

To increase the accessibility of these hearings, cities must take the following steps:

- At least one hearing must occur on a Saturday, Sunday, or after 6 p.m. on a weekday
- If a redistricting hearing is consolidated with another local government meeting, the redistricting hearing portion must begin at a pre-designated time
- Local public redistricting hearings should be made accessible to people with disabilities

This September 27th, 2021 hearing is the first of four required hearings. The purpose of this public hearing is focused on receiving public comment and input regarding communities of interest and other local factors that should be considered while drafting district maps. A *community of interest* under the Elections Code (Section 21601(c)) is defined as “a population that shares common social or economic interests that should be included within a single district for purposes of its effective and fair representation.”

Possible features defining community of interest might include, but are not limited to:

1. School attendance areas;
2. Natural dividing lines such as major roads, hills, or highways;
3. Areas around parks and other neighborhood landmarks;
4. Common issues, neighborhood activities, or legislative/election concerns; and
5. Shared demographic characteristics, such as:
 - Similar levels of income, education, or linguistic insolation;
 - Languages spoken at home; and
 - Single-family and multi-family housing unit areas.

At this first hearing, the City's demographer, NDC, will present an overview of the redistricting process and requirements, mapping tools that will be forthcoming for the public to use, and a demographic summary of the current council districts based on 2020 Census population data.

Public Outreach and Engagement and Next Steps

In order to increase public awareness and participation in the redrawing of election district boundaries, in addition to its standard outreach channels, the City will also be launching a webpage dedicated to the process to provide residents with a central information point. Staff reports, presentations, and other informational resources will be posted to this page, and a press release will be issued to make residents aware of this resource. This page will also be used to publish district maps submitted for consideration.

In addition to the four public hearings required by law, a separate Community Workshop has been scheduled for October 9th 2021 to provide the public with an additional opportunity to participate and learn how to use the mapping tools. The City's demographer, NDC, will attend all meetings to facilitate the public engagement process.

The following is a schedule of the redistricting process:

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| August 23, 2021 | Informational presentation on the redistricting process and direction on the use of a commission to establish the district boundaries |
| September 27, 2021 | 1 st Public Hearing: input on "Communities of Interest"; overview of process, Demographic Summary |
| October 9, 2021 (Saturday, time TBD) | Community Workshop: Mapping tools and "Communities of Interest" discussion (NDC & Staff) |
| November 8, 2021 | 2 nd Public Hearing: Draft maps presented; Council selects focus maps and may request revisions |
| December 20, 2021 | 3 rd Public Hearing: Review of revised maps/may request revisions and Introduction of first reading of an ordinance |
| January 24, 2022 | 4 th Public Hearing: Second reading of ordinance and adoption of final map |

The following alternatives are available to the City Council:

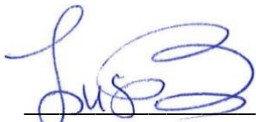
1. Hold a public hearing to receive public input on the composition of districts and the “communities of interest” for purposes of redrawing election district boundaries;
2. Receive a presentation from the City’s demographic consulting firm, National Demographics Corporation; and
3. Close the public hearing and set the next public hearing for November 8, 2021.
4. Provide staff with further direction.
5. Take no action.
6. Staff recommends Alternative Nos. 1 through 3.

SUGGESTED CITY COUNCIL MOTION

I move to accept the public testimony received this evening and set a second public hearing on November 8, 2021 for further consideration and input regarding the redrawing of City Council districts.

SUMMARY

Since the City Council’s transition to by-district elections in 2018, the State has enacted new laws governing the redistricting process, including the FAIR MAPS Act, which was adopted by the California legislature and took effect January 1, 2020. The FAIR MAPS Act contains specified criteria that must be considered in redrawing district boundaries, new requirements for public hearings, and new outreach requirements. This first public hearing is focused on receiving public comment and input regarding communities of interest and other local factors that should be considered while drafting district maps. The City’s demographer, NDC, will present an overview of the redistricting process and requirements, mapping tools that will be forthcoming for the public to use, and a demographic summary of the current council districts based on 2020 Census population data. The redistricting process for Simi Valley must be completed by April 17, 2022.



Lucy Blanco
City Clerk



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