



City Council Agenda Report

Meeting Date: September 24, 2024

Prepared By: Jon Maginot

Approved By: Gabriel Engeland

Subject: Hold Public Hearing No. 4 to receive a presentation from the City's consulting demographer, Redistricting Partners, to discuss and provide further directions as to the development of district boundaries and additional draft district maps for consideration for the City of Los Altos; solicit public input on the maps and on the order of elections of the five new districts, and whether candidates for City Council must be residents and electors of the district in which they seek election for any period of time prior to filing their nomination papers and declaring their intent to run.

COUNCIL PRIORITY AREA

- Business Communities
- Circulation Safety and Efficiency
- Environmental Sustainability
- Housing
- Neighborhood Safety Infrastructure
- General Government

RECOMMENDATION

Hold Public Hearing No. 4 to receive a presentation from the City's consulting demographer, Redistricting Partners, regarding additional draft maps developed by the public and Redistricting Partners, receive the results of community outreach, provide direction regarding the final draft map for adoption at Public hearing No. 5 on the October 8, 2024 , consider which specific districts will constitute the two (2) districts on the ballot in November 2026 and the three (3) on the ballot in November 2028, and determine whether candidates for City Council must be residents and electors of the district in which they seek election for any period of time prior to filing their nomination papers and declaring their intent to run..

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact to hold this meeting as the City has already retained the services of outside legal counsel and a demographer to assist in the transition to district-based elections.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Not applicable

PREVIOUS COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

On April 18, 2024, the City received a Notice of Violation of the California Voting Rights Act ("CVRA"). The letter asserts that the City is in violation of the CVRA because the City's councilmember elections are at-large as opposed to by district and there exist racial polarization and vote dilution. On May 28, 2024, the City Council adopted a resolution declaring its intent to transition to a district-based electoral system commencing in November of 2026.

On June 11 and July 13, 2024, the City Council held the first and second of five public hearings required for the City's transition to by-district elections. Public hearings nos. 1 and 2 were held prior to any draft maps being drawn. Redistricting Partners, the City's retained demographer, made presentations at both public hearings regarding the CVRA. Those presentations covered the composition and number of districts, as well as the public input process. Members of the public provided input at both hearings regarding various communities of interest in and the various attributes of the City of Los Altos. At its July 13th hearing, the City Council, with public input, provided direction to begin drawing draft maps for a by-district election system comprised of five districts and a rotational mayor.

At the August 28, 2024 public hearing, Council received a presentation on the first set of three draft maps and began a robust community outreach process. At the August 28th hearing, the City's consulting demographer, Redistricting Partners, presented three draft maps as a way for the City Council and community to visualize proposed district boundaries. The City Council also provided further direction on the additional information the City should examine when forming the district boundaries, such as the distribution and of information regarding socio-economic status, age, school boundaries, shopping districts, and parks.

On October 8, 2024, at the fifth and final public hearing, the City Council is scheduled to adopt the final City Council district map. By law, the City Council has until October 31, 2024 as the final legal deadline to adopt the City Council district boundary map and determine the order of election for the five (5) City Council districts, that is – which two (2) districts will select a Councilmember in the November 2026 general election, and which three (3) districts will do so in November of 2028.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Following Public Hearing No. 4, the City embarked on a robust community engagement campaign. The purpose of this engagement campaign was to solicit feedback on where district boundaries should be drawn and where the different communities of interest are throughout the City. Outreach events included presentations to various community groups, community workshops and tabling at the Downtown Farmers' Market, two libraries and the Lucky Supermarket.

In these ways, the City has provided multiple ways for the public to submit feedback at formal hearings, City-sponsored workshops, and via on-line submissions of community of interest forms, draft maps, and other input.

As of September 19, 2024, the City has received two COI forms and 24 draft maps from the public. Public hearings, meetings, and workshops have also been open and available for participation of City residents throughout this process looking toward the final map adoption by the City Council.

A summary of the outreach can be found as Attachment No. 1.

In response to this input, the City's demographer developed and revised maps to address the public's concerns and the direction provided by the City Council, all the while ensuring that the City complied with the criteria mandated by the California Voting Rights Act and the Federal Voting Rights Act. The City is using the latest 2020 Census data provided by the Statewide Database with the state prison population reallocated, as required under the Fair Maps Act. These maps use the underlying Census tract geography to establish the boundaries of individual City Council districts. In drawing these maps, the utmost care will be taken to honor neighborhoods and communities of interest and the public input received.

At the September 24, 2024 meeting, the City Council will again hear public feedback on the map drafts as well as regarding the sequence of elections. The City Council also may provide additional feedback on the draft maps, or ask for new draft maps, for the next hearing on October 8, 2024.

Regarding the sequence of elections, the City Council will consider which two (2) districts will select a Councilmember in the November 2026 general election and which three (3) districts will do so in November of 2028. As required by law, the City Council will make this decision "in the spirit of the California Voting Rights Act."

At the September 24th meeting, the City Council will also determine whether candidates for City Council must be residents of the district in which they seek election for any period of time prior to filing their nomination papers. Pursuant to Government Code section 34882, a candidate running for a city councilmember position is not eligible to hold that office unless they reside in the geographical area making up the district from which they are elected at the time their nomination papers are issued. There is no requirement related to a minimum residency period, and the City is not required to impose such a requirement. In fact, neighboring cities have taken different positions on this issue – some have imposed a 30-day residency requirement while others have imposed no minimum residency requirement. The City Council invites the public to provide their input on this topic.

At the fifth hearing on October 8, 2024, the City Council will be asked to select a final map for adoption and also establish the sequence of elections. In this case, the City Council will pass an ordinance that defines both the boundaries of the five new districts as well as the order of elections. Alternatively, the City Council might also decide that more work is necessary and provide additional direction for revised maps at an additional future hearing, which again will be posted at least seven (7) days prior to that next hearing.¹

¹ The requirement that there be five (5) hearings is a minimum and not a maximum.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Community Engagement Summary
2. Public Comments received as of September 17, 2024
3. Draft Maps A-E
4. Draft Map A Detail
5. Draft Map B Detail
6. Draft Map C Detail
7. Draft Map D Detail
8. Draft Map E Detail