

# San José Charter Review Commission

## Recommendation Memo Template

*Drafted April 19th, 2021; Revised July 2nd, 2021*

### Instructions

1. Complete sections 1-3 below.
2. Rename document. Replace everything after the “-” in the document name with the proposal name.
  - a. *Example: "SJ CRC Recommendations Memo - Ranked Choice Voting"*
3. When ready, email to the Commission Secretary ([CharterReview@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:CharterReview@sanjoseca.gov)) for posting to the appropriate subcommittee or full Commission. Final deadline for submitting subcommittee recommendations is 12 noon on the following dates:
  - a. Friday, July 26 for Voting & Elections Subcommittee
  - b. Friday, August 23rd for Governance Structure Subcommittee
  - c. Friday, September 3rd for Policing & Municipal Law, Accountability & Inclusion Subcommittee

### 1) Proposal Name

<b>Proposal Name:</b>	<i>Proposal to expand the number of Council Districts to better represent the people of San Jose.</i>
<b>Submitted by:</b>	<i>Elections &amp; Voting Subcommittee: Commissioners George Sanchez and Jose Posadas</i>
<b>Date submitted:</b>	<i>June 21, 2021</i>

### 3) Proposal Details

<p><b>1) What problem(s) are you trying to address?</b></p> <p><i>Before suggesting a solution, it is important to be clear about the problem you aim to solve.</i></p>	<p>As San Jose has grown in population so has the feeling of residents that they are not being fairly represented within their respective council districts.</p> <p>San Jose originally was governed by a 7-member city council elected citywide. In 1978 voters passed Measure F which established an 11-member city council and district elections for 10 of the council seats.</p> <p>San Jose's population in 1980 was 629,442 with each councilmember representing approximately 63,000 residents. Today each councilmember represents approximately 100,000 residents.</p> <p>Through this proposal, we are trying to address the increase in population in San Jose during the past 40 years. Increasing the number of Council Districts would reduce the number of residents per council district. This would ensure better representation of each Council District.</p>
<p><b>2) How has this problem possibly benefited or burdened people, especially BIPOC, low-income, undocumented and immigrant, those experiencing houselessness, etc.?</b></p> <p><i>Is there data that speaks to the impact of this problem? What does the disaggregated data tell us?</i></p>	<p>Until the reform made possible by district elections, our Black, Indigenous, and People of Color had been largely unrepresented in city council and as a result their communities received less government services and funding for their neighborhoods.</p> <p>Our city council, through district elections, now better reflects the demographics of our residents but the increase in population (nearly double) has resulted in less meaningful representation of those residents in their respective districts.</p> <p>These individuals get less attention due to the larger number of residents in each district. A smaller population per council district would allow each Councilmember to better deal with the issues of the unhoused population, immigrants and they myriad of problems that come with an ever-increasing population.</p>

**3) What change are you proposing?**

*Describe the revision to [San José's Charter](#) that you are proposing. Include relevant Charter section numbers.*

We are recommending a change in the number of council districts to the City Council. Specifically, we are requesting that the composition of the city council be more in line with the ratio that existed when Measure F was approved, and each council district represented fewer residents than is the case currently.

Section 401. Composition of Council

**4) Is this change feasible?**

*Think through the revision you are proposing. Is it legally possible? Is it practical? If there are questions you cannot answer, list them here.*

Yes, changes of this type have taken place in many cities throughout California and across the country. The redrawing of the Council Districts would certainly seem to be a practical idea. The number of Council Districts have stayed the same since 1979. It would certainly be in the best interests of San Jose residents to have better representation in City Hall.

As a comparison, the city of Denver currently consists of 11 council seats which breaks down to 66,868 residents per council district. They are currently discussing increasing their council to 13 seats which would break down to 56,580 residents per district.

Feasibly, it would be possible to reduce the number of residents represented per district which, depending on the number determined by the City Council, could increase the composition of the city council anywhere from 12 to 15 total council districts.

**5) Who might benefit from or be burdened by this change?**

*Is there data that speaks to the potential impact of this change? What are the potential unintended consequences of this change?*

Each resident in San Jose would be better served by the increase in Council Districts. The current redistricting process being overseen by the City's Redistricting Commission would need to be finalized to make sure that each district would be as equal in population as possible. The figures used in this process could be based on the last census that was completed in 2020. In the event this redistricting process will not be finalized in time for the next general election it could be finalized mid-census, i.e. 2025.

**6) What are the arguments against this proposal?**

*Summarize the arguments you expect or data you have found in opposition to this recommendation.*

One argument could be that there is no need for such a change to Council Districts at this time. There is currently a Redistricting Commission in place that is working on the 2020 census to bring about an equitable distribution for all current Council Districts. Another argument would be that the current system has worked well for the past 40 years so why change things at this time.

<p><b>7) Must this be a Charter revision?</b></p> <p><i>Can this problem be addressed without changing the charter (e.g., Council action, cultural change)? If not, should this be a policy recommendation to be included in the Commission's report?</i></p>	<p>Changing the composition of the city council would require a change to the City Charter.</p> <p>We believe this change could come about through the action of the City Council to move forward on such a proposal. The citizens of San Jose would ultimately decide whether to add Council Districts or not.</p> <p>We believe this should be a recommendation by the Charter Review Commission to be included in the Commission's report.</p>
<p><b>8) Are there other examples of this change?</b></p> <p><i>If you have found other examples of this change, please share them and any outcomes that have been observed.</i></p>	<p>Yes, other Council Districts have been increased to better represent the population of those districts including the City of Santa Clara locally. Increasing district representation helps to promote the diversity of neighborhoods that are reflected on the city council and aides in representing the diversity of opinions, backgrounds, cultures, and experiences from various communities within our districts.</p>

### 3) Proposal Research & Citations

List below the results of any research conducted to inform this memo.

<p><b>List of citations</b></p> <p><i>All data must be cited so that Commissioners who are not part of the Subcommittee in question may locate the source of information as needed.</i></p>	<p>Commissioner Percival has done research in this area which he has shared with our subcommittee that demonstrates the number of districts and the population represented by Council Members. In San Jose, the ratio is 102,800 residents per Councilmember. Of course, that number is now greater since it is based on 2019 ACS data.</p>
<p><b>Any speakers who presented to the</b></p>	<p>None on this topic.</p>

**subcommittee must be listed.**

*Include name, title, affiliations, etc., along with a brief summary of the information presented by them.*

**Relevant Links**

*Provide links or locations of the information in this research as much as possible, otherwise provide attachments.*