

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) 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

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| Proposal Name: | Adding Council Districts |
| Submitted by: | Barbara Marshman |
| Date submitted: | 10/13/2021 |

2) Proposal Details

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| <p>1) What problem(s) are you trying to address?</p> <p><i>While many San Jose residents solution, it is important to be clear about the problem you aim to solve.</i></p> | <p>Some San Jose residents say they don't feel adequately represented by their councilmember and feel ignored when they seek information or offer opinions to the council office. It is a perennial complaint for some, But it was the main problem addressed by the last charter review commission in 1985, when the city still had at-large council elections. That commission recommended, and voters approved, a system of 10 council districts drawn to unite communities of interest. It worked. Districts improved representation for many residents, focused more city council attention on parts of the city it had mostly ignored and increased the diversity of the council. Each district had about 60,000 residents. Today each council district has a population of more than 100,000, as city population has surpassed 1 million. The question is: Would increasing the number of</p> |
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| | <p>districts improve representation? And at what point does increasing the number of council members make the body too unwieldy for efficient decision making?.</p> |
| <p>2) How has this problem possibly benefited or burdened people, especially BIPOC, low-income, undocumented and immigrant, those experiencing houselessness, etc.? <i>Is there data that speaks to the impact of this problem? What does the disaggregated data tell us?</i></p> | <p>Because this issue was raised relatively late in our commission’s work, we have no real data, only anecdotal information and many questions.. Frank Maitski has compiled a fascinating chart showing how many council districts the 50 largest cities have, and numbers vary widely -- but they don’t measure the quality of representation. Meanwhile, people following San Jose’s redistricting commission for the 2020 census feel that disproportionate growth in different parts of the city may force big changes in the current 10 districts that may make some people unhappy.</p> |
| <p>3) What change are you proposing? <i>Describe the revision to San José’s Charter that you are proposing. Include relevant Charter section numbers.</i></p> | <p>It is too late to change the currently empaneled redistricting commission’s mandate. But our subcommittee is recommending a more regular re-examination of the charter, perhaps once a decade -- and we further recommend that this question of whether more council districts would improve city government should be on their agenda.</p> <p>To avoid our current timing problem, the next commission should begin studying the issue several years before the 2030 census redistricting, so there is time for voters to decide on a proposal before that analytical work begins.</p> <p>We recommend considering no more than two additional districts if any. Radical change would be unhelpful.</p> <p>The next charter commission should examine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Whether dividing the city into 12 districts will make it easier to group like communities. ● Whether community support for adding districts is strong enough to move forward. ● Whether other cities have found a correlation between increasing the number of districts and providing more effective government. ● Whether there are other ways to improve representation without |

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| | <p>adding council districts--perhaps by mandating certain kinds of positions in each office. Today, some council offices are far better at reaching out and responding to constituents. Is there a way to institutionalize that skill within the current districts?</p> |
| <p>4) Is this change feasible? <i>Think through the revision you are proposing. Is it legally possible? Is it practical? If there are questions you cannot answer, list them here.</i></p> | <p>Changing the number of council districts is not feasible for redistricting currently under way but will be feasible if it is adopted by voters before work begins on the 2030 census results.</p> |
| <p>5) Who might benefit from or be burdened by this change? <i>Is there data that speaks to the potential impact of this change? What are the potential unintended consequences of this change?</i></p> | <p>Residents might benefit from easier access to their council member. Government policies on equity issues could improve if disadvantaged racial, ethnic and other groups are better represented. Running for office also might get a little less costly with fewer voters in each district.</p> <p>ITaxpayers might object to the extra cost of adding council offices.</p> <p>The unintended consequence could be more me-first politics when narrower communities have a stronger grip on their council members. A larger council focused on disparate issues also might be harder for a mayor to lead effectively.</p> |

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| <p>6) What are the arguments against this proposal? <i>Summarize the arguments you expect or data you have found in opposition to this recommendation.</i></p> | <p>Arguments against would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cost ● Increased NIMBYism ● You can't keep expanding the council infinitely as a city grows, and 10 is a reasonable size. Six of the 10 largest cities in the research linked below have 11 or fewer council members. |
| <p>7) Must this be a Charter revision? <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>The number of council districts is in the charter.</p> |
| <p>8) Are there other examples of this change? <i>If you have found other examples of this change, please share them and any outcomes that have been observed.</i></p> | <p>None has surfaced, but research has been limited. It seemed pointless spend time on a change that couldn't take place for a decade.</p> |

3) Proposal Research & Citations

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

| Questions | Recommending Person Response to Questions | Subcommittee Notes (i.e. Agreements, questions, additions, concerns, next step, etc.) |
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| <p>List of citations <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>Any speakers who presented to the subcommittee must be listed. <i>Include name, title, affiliations, etc., along with a brief summary of the information presented by them.</i></p> | | |
| <p>Relevant Links <i>Provide links or locations of the information in this research as much as possible, otherwise provide attachments.</i></p> | <p>Frank's charts/research!!!</p> | |

