

# San José Charter Review Commission Recommendation Memo -- Adding Council Districts

## 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 Mem~~o~~**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

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

## 2) Proposal Details

<p>1) What problem(s) are you trying to address?</p> <p><i>While many San Jose residents solution, it is</i></p>	<p>A 1978 initiative replaced San Jose’s at-large council elections with district elections. The 10 districts grouped communities of interest so that neighborhoods throughout the city and members of different racial, ethnic and other interest groups had more access to and influence on City Hall. Each district originally held about 60,000 residents. Today, with city</p>
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<p><i>important to be clear about the problem you aim to solve.</i></p>	<p>population exceeding one million, each district has more than 100,000 residents. At the same time, San Jose has experienced the national trend of increasing income disparities, amplifying concerns that policies and programs need to be in the interest of all parts of the city. And uneven patterns of development over the past decade are forcing the city's redistricting committee to look at very different district divisions to keep population evenly divided. This begs the question: Should the city look at increasing the number of council districts to more effectively represent communities of interest?.</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> <i>Is there data that speaks to the impact of this problem? What does the disaggregated data tell us?</i></p>	<p>The 10 council districts maintain a reasonable-size governing body that may be more effective and nimble than a larger group to implement policies and programs.</p> <p>But smaller districts might offer more focus on communities of greater need. They could help make democracy more real and credible to communities that doubt their interests are taken as seriously as others'. In turn, more trust could make collaborative democracy work better.</p>
<p><b>3) What change are you proposing?</b> <i>Describe the revision to <a href="#">San José's Charter</a> that you are proposing. Include relevant Charter section numbers.</i></p>	<p>A redistricting commission is already at work and extensive research and population data from the 2020 census have been done. It would be a waste of public time and expense to suggest a change in district numbers for this cycle. But we recommend that the question be studied before the next redistricting process begin, and early enough to schedule a public vote if a change is recommended.</p> <p>The review should examine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether dividing the city into perhaps 12 districts would make it easier to group like communities.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether community support for adding districts is strong enough to move forward.</li> <li>• Whether other cities have found a correlation between increasing the number of districts and providing more effective government.</li> <li>• Whether cities with smaller council districts have more or less conflict over issues of equity such as locating affordable housing.</li> <li>• Whether there are other ways to improve representation or equity in delivering services without adding council districts. Today, some council offices are far better than others at reaching out to constituents and responding to their concerns. Is there a way to institutionalize that ability without adding council seats?</li> </ul>
<p><b>4) Is this change feasible?</b></p> <p><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>It will be feasible if it is adopted by voters before work begins on the 2030 census results.</p>

<p><b>5) Who might benefit from or be burdened by this change?</b></p> <p><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, particularly in under-served communities. Disadvantaged racial, cultural and interest groups could gain a stronger voice. Candidates might find it less costly to run in a smaller district, opening the field to more residents.</p> <p>The unintended consequence could be more me-first politics when narrower communities have a stronger grip on their council members. This could lead to a less functional council.</p>
<p><b>6) What are the arguments against this proposal?</b></p> <p><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"> <li>● Cost, depending on how the change is structured.</li> <li>● Increased NIMBYism as councilmembers represent narrower constituencies.</li> <li>● The council can't expand infinitely as a city grows, and 10 is a reasonable size. Six of the 10 largest cities in the country have 11 or fewer council members.</li> </ul>

<p><b>7) Must this be a Charter revision?</b> <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><b>8) Are there other examples of this change?</b> <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>(i.e. Agreements, questions, additions, concerns, next step, etc.)</i>
<p><b>List of citations</b> <i>All data must be cited so that Commissioners who are not part</i></p>		

<p><i>of the Subcommittee in question may locate the source of information as needed.</i></p>		
<p><b>Any speakers who presented to the subcommittee must be listed.</b> <i>Include name, title, affiliations, etc., along with a brief summary of the information presented by them.</i></p>		
<p><b>Relevant Links</b> <i>Provide links or locations of the information in this research as much as possible, otherwise provide attachments.</i></p>		