

Fact Sheet on Potential Change in Voting to Council Districts

1. In 2018, Carson received a legal challenge alleging its Council elections, currently held under an “at large” system, result in racially polarized voting, resulting in minority vote dilution, violating the California Voting Rights Act.
2. Those making the allegation have demanded the City begin the process of transitioning from at-large to district-based elections, and they have threatened legal action if the City does not do so.
3. Very few cities in California, if any, have successfully defended against a voting rights challenge; as a result, the City of Carson has decided to undertake the process to consider voting by districts. One of the first steps is to hire a demographer to assist in creating the maps.
4. The Government Code allows the City to change from at-large elections for the City Council to district-based elections by ordinance. The City is considering four districts for members of the City Council, with the Mayor continuing to be elected at-large by all the voters in the City.
5. The Elections Code lays out several steps, including at least four public hearings, which the City must satisfy prior to adopting an ordinance formally transitioning to district-based elections. City Charter Section 301 provides “the members of the city council and the mayor shall be elected by the voters from the City at large...” so the Charter would also need to be amended to switch to districts.
6. The members of the City Council are currently elected at-large. The City currently has a directly elected Mayor, which is a separate office from the other members of the City Council.
7. Under an at-large system, every voter in the City votes for each member of the City Council, regardless of where the voter or the candidate is registered to vote in the City. Under a by-district based system of elections, the City is divided into districts, and candidates may only run for the seat representing the district in which they are registered to vote, and voters may only vote for the candidates from their district.
8. Both federal and California law require that voting districts must be as equal in population as possible. California law provides that the following factors also be considered when drawing a district map: (1) topography; (2) geography; (3) cohesiveness, contiguity, integrity, and compactness of territory; and (4) community of interests of the districts.
9. The City is required to hold two public hearings prior to drawing any district maps, over a period of no longer than 30 days, in order to receive public input

and discuss the composition of the voting districts. Those hearings (actually 3) are May 21, June 13 and June 18.

10. After district maps are drawn, the City must hold at least 2 more public hearings over a period of no more than 45 days to receive public input on the draft map(s). Those hearings have not been scheduled yet but would be in July/August.
11. The draft district map(s) must also contain the proposed sequence of elections, if the district elections are to be implemented over the course of several elections, to account for staggered terms of office for sitting members of the City Council.
12. After at least four public hearings are held, the City may introduce and adopt the ordinance establishing district elections.

DATES (NO LATER THEN)	EVENT	COMMENT
	Public Outreach Regarding Process	
June / July, 2019	First Public hearing	Hearing regarding composition of maps and public input, but no draft maps are drawn
July, 2019 (no more than 30 days after First Public Hearing)	Second Public Hearing	Hearing regarding composition of maps and public input, but no draft maps are drawn
August, 2019	Post Draft Maps and Potential Sequence of Elections	Draft maps and proposed sequence of elections must be posted publicly at least 7 days prior to the next public hearing
August / September, 2019 (no less than 7 days after posting of draft maps and proposed sequence of elections)	Third Public Hearing re Draft Maps	City Council considers the draft maps, with input from the public
September, 2019 (no more than 45 days after Third Public Hearing)	Fourth Public Hearing Re Draft Maps; Select Map and Introduce Ordinance	City Council considers the draft maps, with input from the public; If no changes, then City Council may select a map and introduces the ordinance
October, 2019	Second Reading of Ordinance	Ordinance is adopted.
November 19, 2019	Recommended last regular Council meeting to call Special Election for Charter Amendment and Pass Necessary Resolutions	
March 3, 2020	Special Election for Charter Amendment	
November 3, 2020	First District Elections	