



DISTRICTING FOSTER CITY

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS DISTRICTING?

Districting is the establishment of boundaries for election districts. It determines who can run and who can vote in each district. Candidates and voters must live within their respective election districts. This does not impact city services to the public. The only change the districting process creates is how City Council Members are elected.

Districting only happens once. After City Council boundaries are established, the City will conduct redistrictings to balance the district populations following the results of each decennial census, with the next U.S. Census collection being 2030. This ensures that each elected official represents about the same number of constituents. All district lines must be reviewed to meet strict requirements for population equality and voting rights protections in accordance with the Federal Voting Rights Act and the California Elections Code.

WHY DOES DISTRICTING MATTER?

Districting determines which neighborhoods and communities are grouped together into a district for purposes of electing a City Council member. The City Council is seeking input on the district voting map for Foster City. Community members have an opportunity to share with the City Council how they think district boundaries should be drawn to best represent their community.

WHAT IS THE CRITERIA FOR SHAPING DISTRICTS?

Many factors may be considered, but population equality is the most important. Other factors include Topography (natural barriers, boundaries or landmarks, geography (major streets and neighborhood blocks), cohesiveness (contiguity, integrity and compactness of the area, communities of interest (established neighborhoods, groups with cultural bonds, common issues or concerns, voting precincts or other types of divisions).

Community input and Census data will be used to create districts. The City has hired professional demographer Redistricting Partners to help create proposed district boundaries. The community will have access to 'public mapping tool kits' to provide input on how districts could be drawn. The website will include a feature that will allow the community to draw and submit their own maps. The City's hired demographer will draft proposed maps that ensure compliance with the Federal Voting Rights Act and the California Voting Rights Act requirements. The City Council would then adopt the final district map by ordinance.

ARE DISTRICT BOUNDARIES PERMANENT?

No. The City is required to review and adjust the district lines following each census. We will next review the district maps in 2031 and make changes based on the data received in the census.

WHY IS FOSTER CITY TRANSITIONING TO DISTRICT ELECTIONS?

At a meeting on August 19, 2024, the City Council discussed a letter received from a potential plaintiffs' attorney, Shenkman & Hughes PC, on July 22, 2024, alleging a violation of the California Voting Rights Act (the "CVRA") and threatening litigation if the City declines to voluntarily change to a district-based election system for electing Councilmembers. A majority of the Council gave direction to staff to proceed with agendizing the resolution of intent in order to take advantage of the safe harbor provisions of Elections Code section 10010 and avoid costly litigation. At the meeting on September 3, 2024, the City Council approved City Resolution No. 2024-91 declaring Foster City's intent to initiate procedures to transition from at-large election to district-based elections.

CAN A CANDIDATE RUN FOR ELECTION IN A DISTRICT IF THEY DO NOT LIVE WITHIN ITS BOUNDARIES?

No. A candidate must live within the district they wish to represent.

WHAT ARE COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST?

A community of interest is a “contiguous population that shares common social and economic interests that should be included within a single district for purposes of its effective and fair representation.” They are the overlapping sets of neighborhoods, networks, and groups that share interests, views, cultures, histories, languages, and values and whose boundaries can be identified on a map. The following are examples of what can be considered communities of interest:

- Shared interests in schools, housing, community safety, transit, health conditions, land use, environmental conditions, and/or other issues.
- Common social and civic networks, including churches, mosques, temples, homeowner associations, and community centers, and shared use of community spaces, like parks and shopping centers.
- Racial and ethnic compositions, cultural identities, and households that predominantly speak a language other than English.
- Similar socio-economic status, including but not limited to income, home-ownership, and education levels.
- Shared political boundary lines from other jurisdictions, such as school districts, community college districts, and water districts.

Learn more and submit a community of interest form at www.fostercity.org/communityofinterest

WHAT HAPPENS IF THERE IS ONLY ONE CANDIDATE OR NO CANDIDATES RUNNING FOR A CITY COUNCIL SEAT IN A DISTRICT?

If only one candidate runs, that individual will be considered elected to the City Council. If no candidates run for a seat in a district, the situation will be handled in the same way as a vacancy. This will be addressed according to the California Elections Code.

ONCE DISTRICT ELECTIONS ARE ADOPTED, WILL ALL FIVE CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS BE ELECTED AT THE SAME TIME?

No. Two council members will be elected in one cycle, and the remaining three will be elected in the next cycle two years later.

WHAT CRITERIA WILL BE USED TO DECIDE WHICH DISTRICTS WILL HOLD ELECTIONS FIRST?

State law does not specify the criteria for choosing which districts go first. If there is a district or community that is typically underrepresented, it may be prioritized. Otherwise, the decision will be made by the City Council.

WHEN WILL THE CITY COUNCIL DISCUSS DISTRICTING?

Foster City has established the following tentative timeline to complete the transition to district elections:

- Monday, October 7, 2024: First public hearing
- Monday, October 21, 2024: Second public hearing
- Monday, November 4, 2024: Third public hearing (first maps hearing)
- Monday, November 18, 2024: Fourth public hearing
- Monday, December 2, 2024: Fifth public meeting (final vote)



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