

City of Sacramento

Legislation Text

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Title:

Redistricting Criteria: Neighborhoods and Communities of Interest

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Location: Citywide.

Recommendation:

Receive and file.

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Attachments:

- 1-Description/Analysis
- 2-Sacramento Neighborhoods Map
- 3-Community Plan Areas Map
- 4-Communities of Interest 2011

Description/Analysis

Issue Detail: Every ten years, after the U.S. Census, the City of Sacramento must re-establish the boundaries for City Council districts. The resulting council district boundaries must be balanced in population in accordance with local, state, and federal rules governing the redistricting process.

Sacramento City Charter section 175 provides that “[i]n addition to following the requirements of [substantially equal population, compliance with federal and state law, and geographic contiguousness], the commission shall consider the following criteria when drawing the final map, in order of priority:

- (1) Existing neighborhoods and community boundaries;

- (2) 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;
- (3) Integrity and compactness of territory;
- (4) Geography and topography;
- (5) Natural and artificial barriers and boundaries;
- (6) Preservation of population cores that have consistently been associated with each council district; and
- (7) Other commission-adopted criteria that do not conflict with the other requirements and criteria listed in this section or with state or federal law.”

This report discusses the first two criteria in that hierarchy: neighborhoods and communities of interest.

Neighborhoods: Neighborhoods evolve over time. The City of Sacramento’s neighborhood boundaries come from a variety of different sources. When Neighborhood Services was established as a City Department in 1993 with a focus on geographic based services, neighborhood maps were essential. Data was taken from parcel maps, subdivision maps, development projects, neighborhood groups, etc., to generally describe neighborhood geographic boundaries. Over the years the City has relied on Neighborhood Services to help identify and navigate neighborhood boundaries as the City grows and neighborhoods change. There are 129 neighborhoods currently identified in the neighborhood map attached below.

Because of the variety of sources used and because residents and neighborhood groups do not always agree on the boundaries, neighborhood mapping is an exercise that is part art and part science. Some areas of the City do not have specific neighborhood definitions. It is important to understand the origin, context, and evolution of neighborhood boundaries. The attached Sacramento Neighborhoods map should be used as a general working guide only - without strict reliance as to its accuracy of defining neighborhood boundaries.

Community Plan Areas: The City of Sacramento has a long history of using community plans to provide policy direction for the various areas of the city. The community plan areas have evolved over the years and were most recently updated during the development of the 2030 General Plan. There are now 10 community plan areas as shown on the attached map:

- Pocket
- South Area
- Fruitridge/Broadway
- Land Park
- East Sacramento
- Central City
- South Natomas
- Arden Arcade
- North Sacramento
- North Natomas

Communities of Interest: Community of interest, as a redistricting criterion, has gained importance in recent decades. A “community of interest” is defined in the charter as “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.” This is the same definition applicable to California’s redistricting commission, and tracks the concept as recognized in various court decisions.

The goal of this criterion is to protect geographic areas that are “communities of interest” from being cut into different districts. For some minority communities, the community of interest approach is a mainstay of their redistricting effort, to provide a meaningful and fair chance to elect officials who best represent the group’s concerns, interests, and priorities. These common “needs and interests” are reflected in patterns of geography, social interaction, trade, political ties, and common interests.

There is no specific tool by which to measure a community of interest, but it must be geographically definable and contiguous to merit consideration in the redistricting process.

The following are some commonly used examples of potential shared geographic, social, and economic characteristics when defining communities of interest. This list is not all-inclusive and has no order of significance:

Political/Geographic

- Urban and rural interests

- Housing patterns and living conditions (urban, suburban, rural)
- Cultural, religious, and language characteristics
- Communication and transportation networks
- Transportation hubs & centers
- Redevelopment areas
- School districts & attendance areas
- Congressional or State legislative districts

Socio Economic

- Income levels
- Educational backgrounds
- Age demographics, household size
- Group quarters, housing owners vs. renters
- Policy issues (concerns about crime, education, etc.)
- Employment and economic patterns (How are community residents employed? What is the economic base of the community?)
- Health and environmental conditions
- Work opportunities

Cultural

- Social interests
- Community centers
- Parks/dog parks
- Media markets
- Occupations and lifestyle

During the 2011 redistricting effort, 11 communities of interest areas were defined, based on written and oral testimony as shown on the attached map:

- Del Paso Heights
- East Sacramento
- Oak Park
- LGBT
- Latino (in 2 areas)
- Meadowview
- River Oaks (in 4 areas)

Policy Considerations: The Sacramento Independent Redistricting Commission must draw a new council district map such that council districts are substantially equal in population, the map complies with federal and state law, and each council district is geographically contiguous. When drawing lines that meet those requirements, the commission must use the criteria listed in the Sacramento City Charter; the top two criteria the commission must consider are “existing neighborhoods and community boundaries” and “communities of interest.”

Economic Impacts: Not applicable.

Environmental Considerations: Not applicable.

Sustainability: Not applicable.

Commission/Committee Action: Not applicable.

Rationale for Recommendation: The SIRC has exclusive authority to redraw council district boundaries and must establish the process to accomplish this task in accordance with local, state, and federal rules governing the redistricting process.

Financial Considerations: Not applicable.

Local Business Enterprise (LBE): Not applicable.