



District Elections Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the City's current election system?

The City currently elects its Council Members through an at-large election system. This means that each Council Member can reside anywhere in the city and is elected by the registered voters of the entire city.

2. What are district elections?

In a district election system, the city is divided into separate geographic districts. Each Council Member is elected by the registered voters of the particular district in which the Council Member resides. Voters do not vote for candidates outside their district.

3. Why is the voting process changing from at-large to by-district?

Over the last several years, cities, school districts, and community college districts throughout the State have been changing from at-large to by-district elections to comply with the California Voting Rights Act (CVRA) and/or to avoid litigation.

On July 1, 2019, the City of Davis received a letter from Rexroad Law alleging that the City of Davis is in violation of the CVRA and must convert to a by-district election. Based on this threat of litigation, the City Council decided at their August 13, 2019, meeting to transition from at-large to by-district elections to mitigate costs associated with potential legal challenges under the CVRA.

4. What is the California Voting Rights Act?

The California Voting Rights Act (CVRA) prohibits an at-large election system if it would impair the ability of a protected class to elect candidates of its choice or otherwise influence the outcome of an election. Jurisdictions can be sued if they elect their governing body using an at-large, from-districts or mixed election system. If the court finds against a jurisdiction, the jurisdiction must change its election system and pay the plaintiff's attorneys, experts and other expenses. Not a single jurisdiction has prevailed in litigation under the CVRA; several jurisdictions have paid millions of dollars in out-of-court settlements, and all challenged jurisdictions have transitioned from at-large elections.

5. What will the process be for creating voting districts?

The City will be conducting a number of meetings and public hearings over the next few months to gather community input from residents. Public participation is strongly encouraged. Draft maps will be drawn by a demographer based on community input.

At the end of the process, after all public input is received and considered, the City Council will select a final map and adopt an ordinance establishing a by-district election system.

6. How will creating voting districts affect me?

Beginning in 2020, Davis residents will have the opportunity to vote for candidates who run in the district in which they live. All Council Members will continue to vote on all matters that come before the City Council.

7. If the City changes to districts for the 2020 elections, could the map change after the 2020 census?

Yes. Once implemented, the district map would be evaluated every 10 years when new census data is made available.

8. How do I participate and get additional information about the process?

A number of meetings and public hearings will be held prior to the adoption of a district-based election system. Information about the time and location of these can be found on the City's website www.cityofdavis.org/districts.