

# City Attorney's Impartial Analysis - Exhibit A

## **Background:**

In response to a threat of litigation under the California Voting Rights Act (CVRA), the City Council (currently six councilmembers are elected under a hybrid “at-large” election system) voted to transition to a by-district elections system for its councilmembers. If approved by voters, this proposal to amend the City Charter would provide for a mayor elected at-large and six councilmembers directly elected from each of the City’s existing districts. If not approved, the City’s existing hybrid election system will remain.

Public entities throughout the state have transitioned from legislative bodies elected at-large to election by-district, where public entities are divided into districts and voters in each district elect a candidate from the district. While there have been limited successes from CVRA lawsuits in favor of public agencies, a majority have resulted in costly litigations. Shortly after the City’s November 2024 general election, the City received notice of a potential CVRA lawsuit from a resident of the City. To avoid costly litigation, the City reached settled with the resident.

Beginning at its April 21, 2025 regular meeting, the City Council decided to ask voters to weigh in on a proposed charter amendment to establish by-district elections for councilmembers and a mayor elected at-large. Over the course of the next two months, the City Council held hearings on draft maps and election sequencing in accordance with the CVRA. On June 16, 2025, the City Council adopted an ordinance placing the Charter amendment to transition the City to by-district elections on a ballot measure, provided that the City utilizes the existing six-district map and places the question of adopting a by-district elections system to the City’s voters. While the CVRA provides cities a limited opportunity to adopt a by-district elections system without a charter amendment, proceeding with a charter amendment ballot measure will allow for the City’s voters to have a direct say in the City’s conduct of future elections.

The City Council is scheduled to move for a consolidation of the ballot measure question with the statewide primary election to be held in June 2026. If the Charter amendment passes at the June 2026 election, the ordinance adopted by the City Council will take effect, meaning that the Charter amendment will apply to implement by-district elections commencing November 2026.

## **Proposed Charter Amendment:**

If the Measure is approved, the City would transition to a by-district election system for the existing six council districts. Because the current election sequence for the City is already

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staggered, by-district voting will commence in November 2026 for districts 1,3, and 5, and then continue on or around November 2028 for the remaining districts. However, the Measure will not affect how the Mayor is elected. The Mayor is directly elected at-large by the voters. If rejected, the City would keep its existing hybrid election system, meaning that the councilmembers who choose to run in their district will be voted on by voters at-large.

**Word Count:** 498 (*must be 500 words or less per Elec. Code 9280.*)

**NOTE:** If the entire text of the measure is not printed on the ballot, nor in the voter information guide, there shall be printed immediately below the impartial analysis, in no less than 10-point bold type, a legend substantially as follows:

“The above statement is an impartial analysis of Ordinance or Measure \_\_\_\_\_. If you desire a copy of the ordinance or measure, please call the elections official's office at (insert telephone number) and a copy will be mailed at no cost to you.”