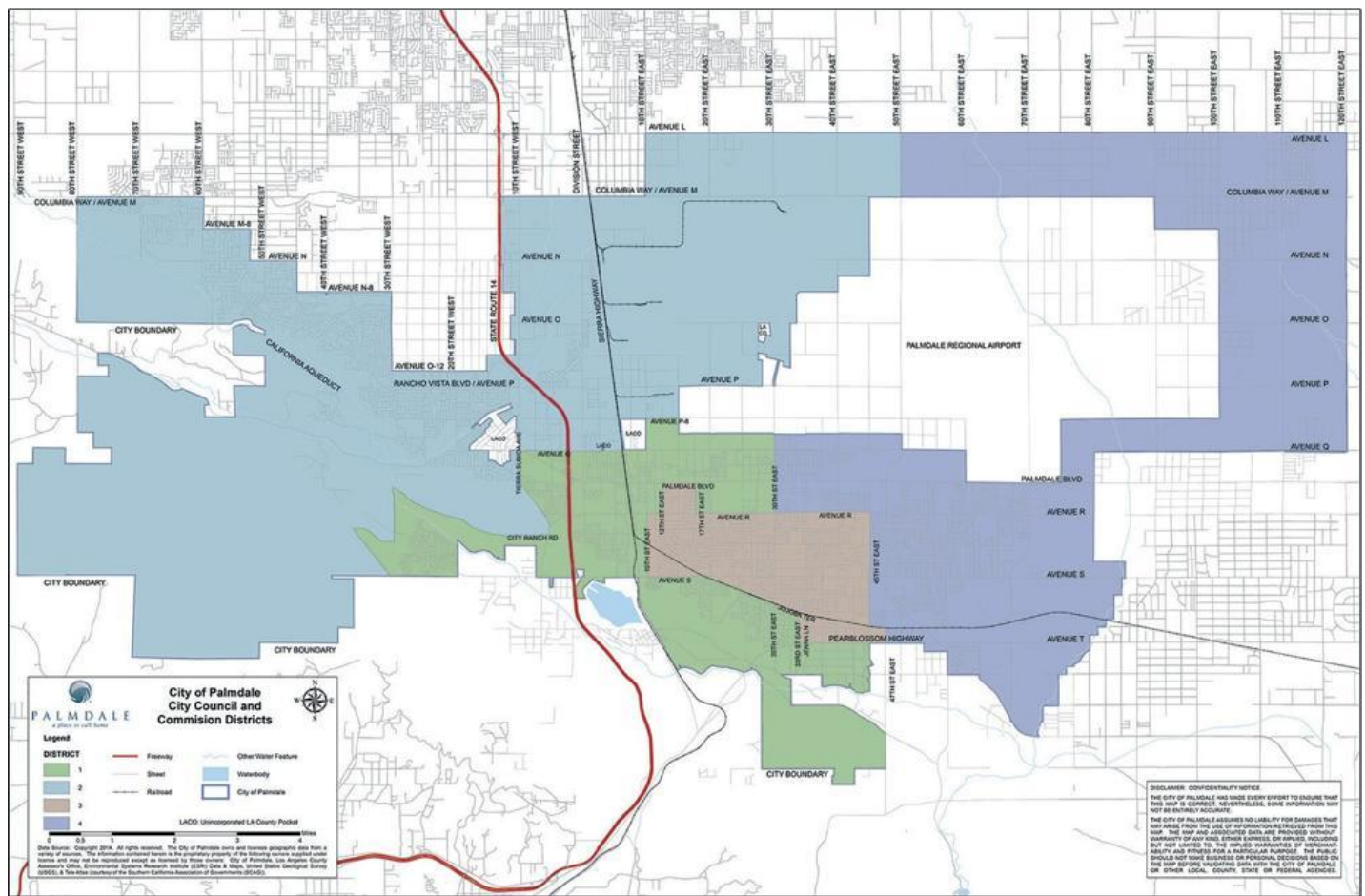


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FEATURED

Palmdale continues its redrawing of districts

By ALLISON GATLIN Valley Press Staff Writer
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These are the current City Council districts of the City of Palmdale. The City is continuing to receive public input on redrawing the districts to reflect the 2020 Census data.

Photo courtesy of the City of Palmdale

PALMDALE — The Palmdale City Council, on Wednesday, took public comment and heard an update on the process of reviewing and redrawing the boundaries for its four Council districts.

Like governments at all levels, Palmdale is going through the every-decade redistricting process, using the latest population data from the 2020 Census.

“You want each Council member to represent more less the same amount of residents,” Consultant Kristin Parks of National Demographics Corporation said.

Four community workshops — one in each district — have already been held to gather input, in addition to the efforts of the demography consultant hired by the city, National Demographics Corporation. Following Wednesday’s hearing, two more will be held before any new maps are approved.

Among the information gathering is input on identifying communities of interest, areas bound by common social or economic features that should be considered as the district boundaries are drawn.

“We do need to pay attention to race and ethnicities in regards to the Voting Rights Act,” Parks said, to avoid diluting the voting power of protective classes. These considerations, however, cannot be the sole factor in determining the district lines.

Resident Xavier Flores thanked NDC for pointing out the potential for three of the districts to be majority-Latino districts.

“These are legal, voting rights districts,” he said. “Any attempt to give us less than this will be challenged, and we want you to know that.”

Another resident raised the possibility of creating five districts, instead of the existing four.

Members of the public are encouraged to visit www.DrawPalmdale.org to create their own district maps using the tools provided there. There are electronic options and means to print paper maps, for those who prefer that format. Paper maps may be submitted to the City Clerk’s office.

Palmdale's Neighborhood Houses are offering opportunity for community members to contribute their thoughts and maps, as well.

"The sooner that you can participate, the better," Parks said.

Maps and other input may be sent to redistrict2021@cityofpalmdale.org

Several people speaking up during the Wednesday meeting said they had difficulties with the software to create maps online. Those issues should be addressed with new options available on the website, City Clerk Shanae Smith said.

The maps and other public input will be considered by the city's 11-member Advisory Redistricting Commission to create maps that fairly represent the city's population and meet all state and federal requirements.

The Commission's next meeting is at 5:30 p.m., Tuesday, in the Council Chambers, 38300 Sierra Highway.

The federal Voting Rights Act and the California Voting Rights Act must be followed as part of the criteria to drawing district lines.

A newer state law, the Fair Maps Act, created standardized redistricting criteria aimed at keeping communities together and prohibiting partisan gerrymandering. It also expanded community outreach and public hearing requirements and timelines, which coincide with the state redistricting schedule.

Palmdale transitioned to by-district Council elections in November 2016, in which the four Council members are elected by voters from within the district they reside. The mayor is elected by voters citywide.

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