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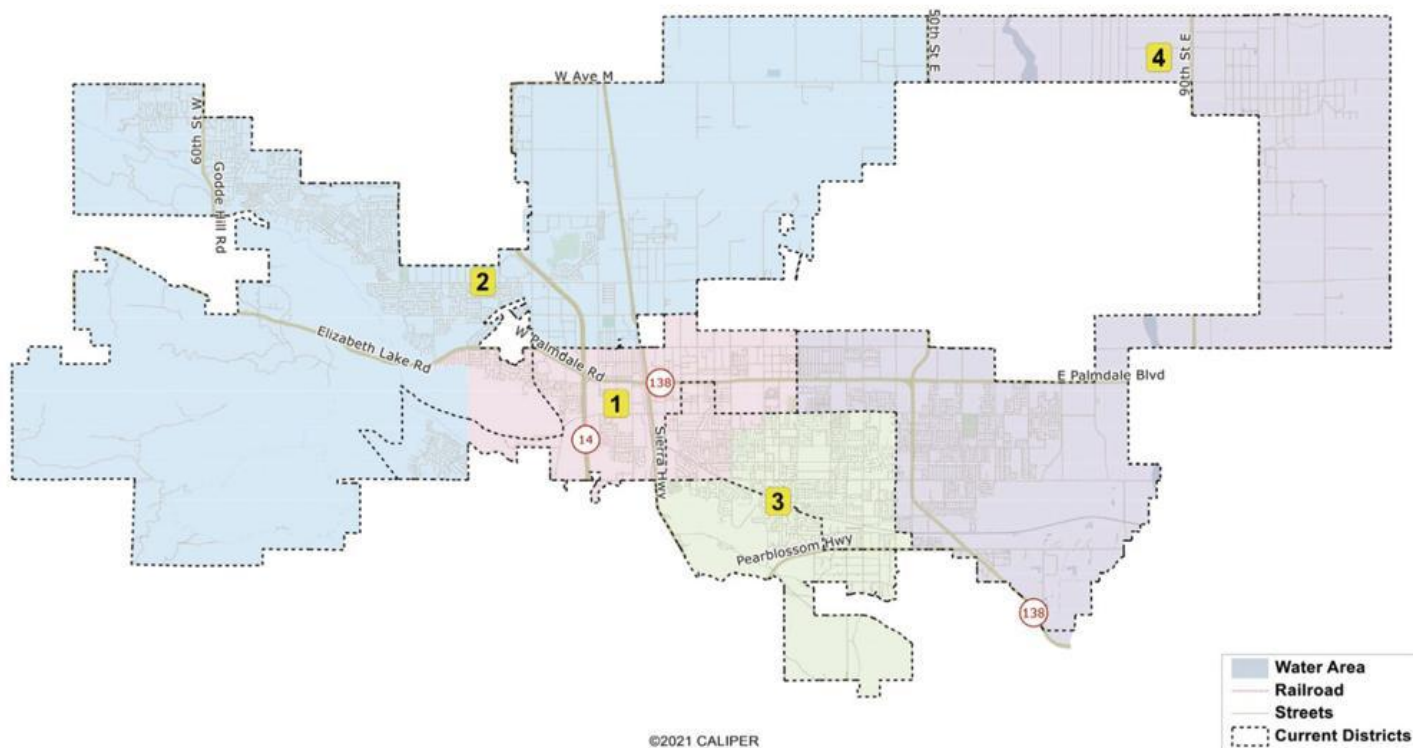
FEATURED

## City getting third map option

Commission to resubmit its previous two choices

By ALLISON GATLIN Valley Press Staff Writer  
Feb 11, 2022

### Palmdale Redistricting 2021 NDC Purple Map



This map created by demographic consultants NDC will be the third under consideration by the Palmdale City Council. The Palmdale Advisory Redistricting commission also will resubmit the previous two options.

Map courtesy of City of Palmdale

**PALMDALE** — The Palmdale Advisory Redistricting Commission decided, on Wednesday, to re-recommend the same two maps the City Council rejected a week ago, along with a third map created by demographic consultants NDC.

“It seems to me that we have performed our role. We have done our due diligence at the time,” Commissioner Engel Thedford said, in making a motion to resubmit the original two maps.

"I believe we performed our duty as a Commission and we are providing maps that I felt we believed in as a group ... understanding that one of them, through NDC's further analysis may potentially have some issues that may need to be addressed, and one of them has no issues," he said.

The third map, labeled NDC Purple, was added as a substitute motion by Commissioner Rochelle Butler, following the 6-3 vote to resubmit the original two recommended maps.

Butler said she felt it would be better for the Council to have another map to review, one that had cleaner boundaries between districts. Her motion passed on a 5-4 vote.

The 11-member Advisory Redistricting Commission was established by the Council to recommend new district boundaries using data from the 2020 Census and following redistricting guidelines established in state and federal law.

After months of public workshops, hearings and meetings, the Council-appointed Commission recommended two maps with new boundaries, chosen from among a total of 15. Of those 15, not all met the state and federal requirements for drawing election districts at first glance, because they did not balance populations or had other obvious deficiencies.

The Council considered the recommended maps, on Feb. 2, and rejected both, sending the matter back to the Commission.

Mayor Pro Tem Richard Loa suggested the recommended maps were created to pursue a political agenda and not to equitably represent the city's population.

"It seems to me there's been some intent that's not driven by trying to keep communities together, but instead is trying to pursue some political agenda," Loa said at the Council meeting, adding he thinks it shows a partisan discrimination by placing two sitting Council members in one district.

One recommended map, created by ALVA, a coalition of Latino organizations, was found to potentially violate the requirements upon closer examination, Kristin Parks of consultants NDC said. It passed initial review at the time the Commission initially recommended it to the Council.

“After the City Council meeting, all of a sudden the ALVA map became non-compliant,” Commission Chair Suzann Reina said. “Somebody claims that we, the Commission, were gerrymandering, which is not what any of us did.”



The ALVA map could be in violation of federal rules against racial gerrymandering, avoiding some areas to take in others to create districts that are more favorably Latino. It could also violate state requirements to create compact districts with easily identifiable boundaries, Parks said.

The very jagged boundary between Districts 1 and 3 appears to show where certain census blocks were included in one or the other district and others excluded. This could be seen as racial gerrymandering, where race is the sole or predominant factor, she said.

“That is really a serious concern,” she said.

The second map originally recommended, labeled Map 208, had no compliance concerns.

All of the maps under consideration create three districts with a majority Latino population, reflecting the city’s 62% overall Latino population.

According to the resolution establishing the redistricting process and the Commission, the Council was to provide a detailed reason as to why the recommendation was rejected. Commission members, Wednesday night, were not all clear on the detailed reasons, which were not conveyed directly to the Commission, but were part of the discussion during the Council meeting.

“There were questions of legality,” Deputy City Attorney Drew Pletcher said. “They wanted a second look at the two maps that were presented for not only reconsideration under federal law, but also state FAIR Map Act or any other law that would apply.”

During its discussion, some on the Council wanted to consider more than the two maps recommended and questioned why they weren’t presented with more options.

Reina said the wording of the resolution forming the Commission requires only one map be recommended, and the Commission did its job by narrowing the choices to two.

The three recommended maps will be published for seven days, before the City Council considers them at the meeting, on Wednesday.

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