



# City Council Memorandum

*City of Arts & Innovation*

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL DATE: DECEMBER 10, 2024

FROM: CITY CLERK WARDS: ALL  
CITY ATTORNEY

SUBJECT: RESHAPE RIVERSIDE REDISTRICTING - DEFERRED CONSTITUENTS

## **ISSUE:**

Discuss options for addressing constituents and board and commissioners who were impacted by the Reshape Riverside Redistricting boundaries.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. Provide direction for establishing guidelines for managing constituents and boards and commissions who were impacted by Redistricting.

## **COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:**

The Governmental Processes Committee met on August 7, 2024, to discuss the effects of implementing the new boundaries. The Committee recommended that the discussion be forwarded to the full City Council. During the meeting, several legal questions emerged concerning implementing the new boundaries and their impact on representation and special elections. Additionally, the City Attorney highlighted the need to address the representation and eligibility of Boards and Commissions regarding the new wards.

## **BACKGROUND:**

The Riverside City Charter Section 402 mandates the City Council to redraw the City Council ward boundaries by ordinance. Following an extensive Reshape Riverside community outreach campaign, the City Council adopted the new ordinance in August 2023. However, the impact of the new boundary lines is contingent upon the elections. This means the new boundaries for the odd-numbered wards took effect after March 2024, while the ward boundaries for even-numbered wards will become effective in June 2026.

The adoption of the new boundaries impacted the representation and voting eligibility of certain populations. The redrawing of electoral wards led to 'Accelerated Voting' and 'Deferred Voting'.

Accelerated Voting happens when residents who voted in the election before redistricting are assigned to a new ward scheduled to vote in the first election after the 2023 redistricting. In other words, the accelerated voters will vote twice in four years.

Deferred Voting happens when residents who voted two years before redistricting are redrawn into a ward scheduled to vote three years after the 2023 redistricting, so their votes are "deferred" by an additional two years.

During the 2024 general municipal election, the City Clerk sent postcards to inform both groups of voters about their voting eligibility. The accelerated population, consisting of approximately 23,278 residents, typically elects its representatives every four years. However, due to redistricting, this group had to vote for their councilmanic representation twice within four years.

In contrast, the deferred population comprises approximately 22,463 residents. They will have to wait until June 2026 to choose their councilmanic representative, which means they will be eligible to vote for their local official six years later than their counterparts in the accelerated population.

This report presents potential solutions for addressing deferred voters and ensuring proper representation for all constituents.

## **DISCUSSION:**

Elections Code (EC) section 21626(a) states that Council members must continue to represent constituents residing within the district boundaries from which they were elected for the duration of their term. This means that during the overlap of prior and new boundaries, Accelerated Voters are represented by two Council members. Please note that the Riverside Municipal Code and the City Charter are silent as to what it means to be "represented" by a City Councilmember and Elections Code section 21626(a) only applies to the manner in which an individual votes after redistricting.

In contrast, Deferred Voters need more clear representation. EC section 21626 indicates that the City Council may, but is not obligated to, assign an elected official or city official to provide constituent services to these voters temporarily. However, the City Charter and the municipal code do not address how constituent services should be provided.

The following options are potential remedies for Council representation in the deferred areas for consideration:

1. **Transitional Representation:** This would offer deferred voters the option of continuing to be represented by their previous council member for a transitional period until July 2026.
2. **Temporary At-Large Representation:** This would temporarily assign the mayor to represent the deferred areas until the next election.

3. **New Established Representation:** This would allow the current Councilmember representing the ward to manage their constituency including the deferred population.
4. **Constituent Choice:** This option would allow constituents to reach out and select any council member of their choosing for supportive services.

**Outreach and Education:** Along with creating a process for representation, the city will launch a comprehensive outreach and education campaign to inform deferred voters about the changes and transitional arrangements. This campaign will aim to foster engagement and ensure constituents are aware of the local officials who represent them.

**Boards and Commissions:** City Charter section 802 requires that each Ward have a representative on each board and commission. The Charter is silent about what happens when a resident is redistricted into a new Ward.

Please note that the Riverside Municipal Code and the City Charter are silent as to what it means to be “represented” by a City Councilmember and Elections Code section 21626(a) only applies to the manner in which an individual votes after redistricting. There are two potential interpretations for Ward representation: (1) the resident resides within the new Ward as soon as the City adopts an ordinance setting the new boundaries and (2) the resident doesn't reside within the new Ward until the resident vote in that Ward. Membership on Boards and Commissions should be reviewed to ensure proper ward representation.

Options include:

- (1) The board or commission could be expanded to add a new seat to accommodate the Ward needing representation; or
- (2) The City Council could remove redistricted board and commission members with five affirmative votes in accordance with Charter section 802 and appoint from the proper Ward; or
- (3) Allow the board and commission members to finish their appointed terms through expiration and then appoint a new member from the applicable Ward.

For Wards 2, 4, and 6, which do not hold a general election for Council representation until June 2026, the Council could decide to use either the prior boundaries for appointments until June 2026 or use the new boundaries immediately for appointments.

### **STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:**

The City's Redistricting Plan contributes to the City Council's Envision 2025 Strategic Plan Priority and Goals:

**Community Well-Being** – Ensuring safe and inclusive neighborhoods where everyone can thrive with the following goal:

**Goal 2.4** - Support programs and innovations that enhance community safety, encourage neighborhood engagement, and build public trust; and,

**High Performing Government** – Providing world-class public service that is efficient, accessible, and responsible to all, with the following goals:

**Goal 5.2** - Utilize technology, data, and process improvement strategies to increase efficiency, guide decision making, and ensure services are accessible and distributed equitably throughout all geographic areas of the City.

**Goal 5.3** - Enhance communication and collaboration with community members to improve transparency, build public trust, and encourage shared decision-making.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

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Attachments:

1. Accelerated Residents Atlas
2. Deferred Residents Atlas
3. Presentation