

# Why Pleasant Hill Residents are Against 4-District Maps

-Taken from [City Council Districting Hearing 5/6/23](#)

## Summary:

- Proposed 4-district maps divide neighborhoods.
- An at-large Mayor would allow one district to have two representatives.
- If you have 4-districts and an at-large mayor, Pleasant Hill could elect a mayor who has never served on the City Council.
- At-large elections go against the spirit and rationale of creating districts.
- Mayor sets the agenda so eliminating a rotation opportunity could take power away from minority districts to discuss topics important to their district.
- City Council votes in the mayor so councilmembers could appoint the same mayor for two year or more years in a row without needing to adopt a 4-district map.
- 5-districts would double the chance of minority representation on City Council.

## Details:

- a. 5-Districts increase the chance of electing a minority candidate. There are two areas in the City that could have districts with majority minority residents; if there is a 4-District map then there is only one majority minority resident district.
- b. 5-Districts would reduce the cost of running a campaign by reducing the number of residents candidates need to reach in their district. One of the goals of the California Voting Rights Act is to reduce the barriers of running an election.
- c. Moving to district elections should be a simple conversion of the existing 5 seats to districts. When redistricting happens in 2030, Pleasant Hill is projected to be a majority minority City, and by then, three elections would have occurred under a 5-district system. If demographics support it, the residents at that time can decide by vote if they like the 5-district system or change it to a 4 district system.
- d. Changing to an at-large, directly elected mayor is the solution to a problem which doesn't exist. Reducing the number of council seats to 4 looks like an incumbent protection gerrymandering plan, not a basis on which to draw districts which reflect "communities of interest." It looks like an attempt to keep four seats on the council leaving only one district open for a diverse candidate when there could be two.
- e. 4-Districts with a rotating Mayor was presented by Council because of the hypothetical problem of district representatives concerning themselves only with the needs of their district, not the "best interests" of the city as a whole. Our school district MDUSD has

district elections yet they represent the whole school district not only schools in their area. City Councilmembers represent the whole city and are elected by district.

- f. If there is need for a councilmember to recuse themselves due to an issue that could affect their property value ([See page 8](#)) it is a larger issue now that 3 of the 5 councilmembers live within 550 ft of one another. In the event a councilmember needed to recuse themselves, the rotating mayor and any other councilmember could step in to support- this does not require an at-large elected mayor solution.
- g. Being mayor is more work at the City and has more responsibility outside the City therefore the position should be compensated differently. Any change in elected office compensation should be approved by voters.
- h. It is not feasible to ask anyone running for mayor to hold a campaign every two years. Running an election is expensive and takes time. Having a two year mayor elected at-large would deter those without personal funds or independent backing from running. It would also take time away from the mayor conducting City business more often than necessary.
- i. In theory, it may seem like a 4-district map would reduce polarization in the community, however in practice when looking at other cities this is not the case. An at-large mayor with district elected city councilmembers creates two classes of elected officials resulting in unequal power dynamics. Since the mayor is the most influential politician in the city, rotating keeps councilmembers the most equal, preventing a mayor from running the city for decades creating a fractious board. It is much better to have equality between councilmembers so you discuss things as equals and not in hierarchical relationships.
- j. An at-large mayor would make the city more adversarial because districts would have to fight for representation on the agenda. Allowing district elected representation a year to lead the conversation would diminish community fighting.
- k. [Additional election options create ballot confusion and dissuade the public from voting.](#) Having to elect a mayor and councilmembers adds to the length of the ballot and increases the likelihood the public won't vote. Continue to have councilmember elections without an at-large mayor option.

## Why Pleasant Hill Residents are Against an At-Large Mayor

-Taken from [City Council Districting Hearing 5/22/23](#)

A rotating mayor offers distinct advantages over having an elected at-large mayor including:

1. **Councilmember Experience:** With a rotating mayor, the community can rest assured the mayor will have councilmember experience. They would already possess an understanding of local issues and challenges. This firsthand knowledge allows them to address community concerns more effectively and make informed decisions for the betterment of the city. An at-large directly elected mayor may never have experience at City Council when they are elected into the role.
2. **Avoiding prolonged influence of special interests:** By maintaining the current process of City Council electing the mayor annually, the risk of special interests setting the agenda for multiple years is reduced.
3. **Flexibility for change:** If the mayor's decisions are not aligned with the city's best interests, councilmembers have the option to select a new mayor in the subsequent year, ensuring responsive leadership.
4. **Equal representation:** Having two representatives in one district will tilt votes in favor of one district. For fair and equal representation each district should have only one representative.
5. **Broadened Representation:** A rotating mayor ensures that different individuals from various backgrounds and perspectives can assume the mayoral role, leading to more inclusive representation and a broader range of ideas and approaches.
6. **Shared Leadership Responsibility:** By rotating the mayorship, the burden (and benefits) of leadership is distributed among multiple individuals. This promotes a collaborative approach to decision-making and reduces the concentration of power in a single person.
7. **Continuity in Governance:** A rotating mayor allows for a smooth transition of leadership without the disruptions typically associated with elections. This continuity ensures the ongoing progress and stability of the city.
8. **Minimized Partisan Influence:** By avoiding long-term mayoral positions, a rotating system helps mitigate the impact of partisan politics on local governance. This allows for a more objective and balanced decision-making process.
9. **Reduced Risk of Corruption:** By avoiding the concentration of power in a single individual for an extended period, a rotating mayor system can help reduce the risk of corruption. Frequent changes in leadership make it more challenging for corruption to take root.
10. **Collaborative Decision-Making:** A councilmember elect mayor encourages a collaborative approach to decision-making. As the mayor is selected from within the council, they are more likely to work closely with fellow councilmembers, fostering a spirit of cooperation and consensus-building.
11. **Accountability and Oversight:** Councilmember elect mayors are accountable to both their fellow councilmembers and their constituents. This dual accountability fosters a stronger sense of responsibility and encourages transparent decision-making.