

COMMENTS ON DISTRICT MAPS (May 28, 2024)

I want to congratulate the council on its progress toward adopting a district map.

Map 501 appears to enjoy substantial public support and divides neighborhoods to a lesser degree than other maps. You may wish to consider using Ventura Avenue, which would provide a clearer boundary and place downtown in just two districts. Moving 100 people is an acceptable population deviation to achieve these goals. 502 and 503 divide downtown four ways, which is undesirable.

The city should not attempt to establish an elected mayor. While cities have preserved at-large mayors when they draw their own maps during the cure period, it is not clear that this complies with the CVRA. There has not been an argument from the public that the city needs a mayor or that electing one would improve the city's governance. It would benefit incumbents who live near each other, but that is not a legitimate consideration under the FAIR MAPS Act, with which the council must also comply.

The four-district maps also appear inferior to Map 501. Each divides downtown, placing substantial parts into three different districts. Each places low-income, industrial areas in a district that will be dominated by Greenhills. These are undesirable outcomes that are not consistent with the FAIR MAPS Act.

Finally, I would urge the city and school district to work with the census bureau's partnership program to develop better block group and tract geographies before the 2030 census. Citizenship data is available by block group, but most socio-economic data is only available by tracts, of which Chowchilla has only three. Greenhills is in the same tract as the very different area west of downtown. Better geographies will help identify socio-economic communities of interest.

The census bureau estimates that about 103 Palestinians and 33 other Arabs live in the city, and almost none is in the two downtown census tracts. Almost all are native-born citizens, so each adult is entitled to vote. We know from testimony that most live West of downtown. While they are not identified as a "protected group" for purposes of federal law, they are an important community of interest that appears to be kept together by each of the maps. Since this cannot be verified by official data, it is important to confirm at the hearing that the boundaries try to keep this community together.

Finally, the council should set a sequence. In Map 501, districts 3 and 4 are high-minority districts with low turnout, so they should elect in the presidential cycle.

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Thank you council for the additional information meeting held on the 18th, and Mr. Pruett for facilitating it. It was really great to see community input from those who aren't able to attend regularly-scheduled meetings due to work or other commitments. From listening to the various comments during that meeting, and in speaking with community members in that meeting and outside of it, it seems that 5 districts would benefit the community most – and it would make most sense given that the current council is made up of 5 seats, and not 4. The overwhelming majority of people I've spoken to have strong opinions against 4 districts with an at-large mayor. There isn't a need or desire to change the way the mayor's role is voted in, and certainly not if it comes at the cost of good and fair representation to the people of Chowchilla. I think it's fair to say this request for 4-district maps did not come from a member of the community at any of the public hearings, so it's unclear how this request came to NDC.

A 5-district map would allow the district boundaries to better represent the various communities of interest, and would allow for the most fair representation of voters from ALL parts of town. Of all maps, I am in favor of map 503 with modifications we emailed to Mr. Tilton on 5/20/2024. The modification being that District 1 include the block bound by Oleander, Cypress Ln, Thomas Childlaw Drive and Parkridge Dr, along with Kites Way (to the extent possible) in order to give better cohesion to the Palestinian & Arab American population in the city.

It is important to have districts 1, 2 & 3 up for election in 2024. This would allow for representation to come onto city council from parts of the city that are not currently represented. District 5, the Greenhills district, should be up for election in 2026 in **any** sequencing scenario since the two councilmembers who's terms are NOT ending this year already live in that district, and it is important to give representation to other parts of the city.

Thank you for your time.

Josué Díaz-Saravia

I'd like to clarify that Mr. Tilton re-named this map that I support as map 504.

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Dear City Council Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for the adoption of a five-district map for the City of Chowchilla. As a resident deeply invested in the well-being and equitable representation of all our communities, I believe that the proposed five-district map 503 configuration offers a more effective and fair system for ensuring that every segment of our city has a voice.

The diversity of Chowchilla is one of our greatest strengths, encompassing a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds and ethnicities. A four-district map, however, risks merging communities with distinctly different needs and priorities, thereby diluting their representation. It is essential that our district boundaries reflect the unique characteristics and interests of our neighborhoods to foster a more inclusive and responsive local government.

By implementing a five-district map, we can create smaller, more cohesive districts that respect the socio-economic and ethnic diversity of our city. This configuration allows for each community to elect a representative who truly understands and advocates for their specific concerns and aspirations. For instance, neighborhoods with higher concentrations of lower-income residents or specific ethnic groups will be better able to elect council members who are directly familiar with their unique challenges and can more effectively address them.

Moreover, the five-district model promotes greater civic engagement by ensuring that all residents feel their voices are heard and their votes matter. It enhances accountability, as each council member will be responsible for a smaller, more manageable constituency, allowing for more direct and meaningful interaction with their constituents.

In conclusion, adopting a five-district map is a crucial step towards achieving fairer and more equitable representation for all communities within Chowchilla. I urge the City Council to also consider putting the districts which lack representation up for vote. If our goal is to have representation for each district we should prioritize the ones which are currently lacking representation amongst the current council members.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Roberto Zapata

Good afternoon, City Council, Mayor and Staff, my name is Jacob Sandoval, I am the State Director for CA LULAC. Thank you for having the extra hearing on Saturday and setting a specific time today, it shows your willingness to get community input on this important step. For the last couple of months, I've driven through the different neighborhoods in Chowchilla to better understand the different communities of interest and where they would be located within each map option.

Map 503 with a few small changes provides the best representation for each district. Currently four of the five current city council members all live in the green Hills area, which will become its own district once the new maps are approved.

All the options given by the demographer regarding the proposed districts for the November Election include the Green Hills area as one of the first districts that will have an election, this would be very unfair to the other districts in the city of Chowchilla which currently do not have representation from their unique community of interest district and neighborhoods.

In listening to the past City Council meetings, I've heard from different city council members stating that they don't have any hidden agenda and are here to serve the community of Chowchilla which I commend you all.

As a result, I strongly urge that you vote 5 district map and proposed district up for the November Election not include Greenhill's District which would already have two remaining city council members that represent their area and will be on the city council for two more years. Also, they've mentioned that you'll have trouble finding people running for office, but I've spoken to several members of the community who are looking forward to district elections and feel empowered to want to represent their unique community of interest that will be created with these district elections.

I propose that the following districts be put on the November 2024 election. Districts 1, District 2 and District 3 on Map 503. Thank you for your time and consideration.