

## Irvine council moves to transition to by-district elections, but voters will make the final decision

If the new voting system is approved, the size of the City Council would increase from five to seven members, with only the mayor elected at-large.



The Irvine city council begins a council meeting on Tuesday, December 13, 2022. Pictured, from left, are councilmember Mike Carroll, Vice Mayor Tammy Kim, Mayor Farrah Khan, councilmember Larry Agran and councilmember Kathleen Trevisan. (Photo by Leonard Ortiz, Orange County Register/SCNG)



By **HANNA KANG** | [hkang@scng.com](mailto:hkang@scng.com) |

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Irvine voters will decide in March whether they want to [transition to by-district elections](#).

The City Council on Tuesday, Oct. 10, adopted a map drawing district boundaries that will be presented to voters during a special municipal election on March 5, the same day as the primary elections.

The map, broken down into six districts, largely keeps neighborhoods intact in single voting districts, including Woodbridge, Great Park and Turtle Rock, and has at least one Irvine Unified high school in each district with the exception of the sixth.

The map does not take effect unless residents vote in favor of moving to by-district elections, where voters choose the councilmember who represents their geographic area. If voters approve it, the size of the City Council would increase from five to seven members with only the mayor elected at large.



Treseder, who said she wanted a map with at least three districts with Asian representation above 40% and maintains UC Irvine student-populated areas in a common district, said the map is “by no means a unanimously favored map.”

Although most of the residents who spoke during Tuesday's meeting favored that map, the Orange County Asian Pacific Islander Community Alliance and several UCI students and university-affiliated individuals spoke out against it. Students asked that the university maintain a district with the University Town Center, Park West apartment homes and other large student communities.

Treseder favored a student-supported map that she said “meets my criteria and looks out for the students” by bringing the “student-populated apartments within the UCI district.”

But Councilmember Larry Agran said the map ultimately chosen in the 3-2 vote Tuesday emerged as the “consensus map.”

“Map 151 is the most popular and least objectionable with no significant citizen objection,” Agran said. “We need a map that’s popular, meets all the criteria and can garner majority support when voters have their say.”

Tuesday was the fifth public hearing in the process to transition to by-district elections. After previous councils resisted pressure — and the threat of a lawsuit — to make the switch to by-district elections, current councilmembers [decided in January to look at the election process further](#).

In the last decade, several cities — and school and special districts — in Orange County [have switched to district elections](#), including Anaheim, Fullerton, Garden Grove, Tustin, Westminster, Los Alamitos and La Palma, in part because of the threat of legal action based on the challenge that citywide voting marginalizes minority communities. Another round of cities have recently faced challenges to their at-large voting and are looking to also transition to district-based elections, including [Laguna Niguel](#) and [San Clemente](#).

If approved by voters, the new system would go into effect in November 2024.

Current council terms would not be affected by the change. Because Irvine councilmembers are elected to four-year terms and were not all elected at the same time, only some districts would be on the November ballot.

The council on Tuesday also approved a budget adjustment allocating \$500,000 for the March special municipal election.

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