



TO: City Manager Elizabeth Pauli
FROM: Rosa McLeod, Government Relations Analyst
Government Relations Office
COPY: City Council and City Clerk
SUBJECT: Ordinance – 2022 Redistricting Proposal
DATE: October 24, 2022

SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:

An ordinance amending Chapter 1.44 of the Tacoma Municipal Code relating to City Council Election Districts, by amending Sections 1.44.020, 1.44.040, and 1.44.060 to update district boundaries.

RCW 29A.76.010 requires Washington State cities to assess voting districts for equal and fair representation every 10 years. This process requires analysis of existing district boundaries against U.S. Census data and revising boundary lines where needed to ensure an equal number of residents across Tacoma’s five Council districts.

Updated U.S. Census data indicates Tacoma’s population grew approximately 10% from 2011 to 2021¹. This growth is spread relatively evenly across the city, with exceptions in District 1 and District 3.

- District 1: 9% population gain
- District 2: 11% population gain
- District 3: 15% population gain
- District 4 : 10% population gain
- District 5: 11% population gain

According to the U.S. Census, Tacoma’s 2021 population is 219,787. As such, the target population goal for each of the City’s five districts is 43,957, with a 1% deviation (approximately 500 residents) to ensure equitable representation. Following 2021 Census data, only Districts One and Three require minor boundary adjustments to balance population numbers. The growth in Districts 2, 4, and 5 falls within the acceptable range of +/- 1% of the target population per district.

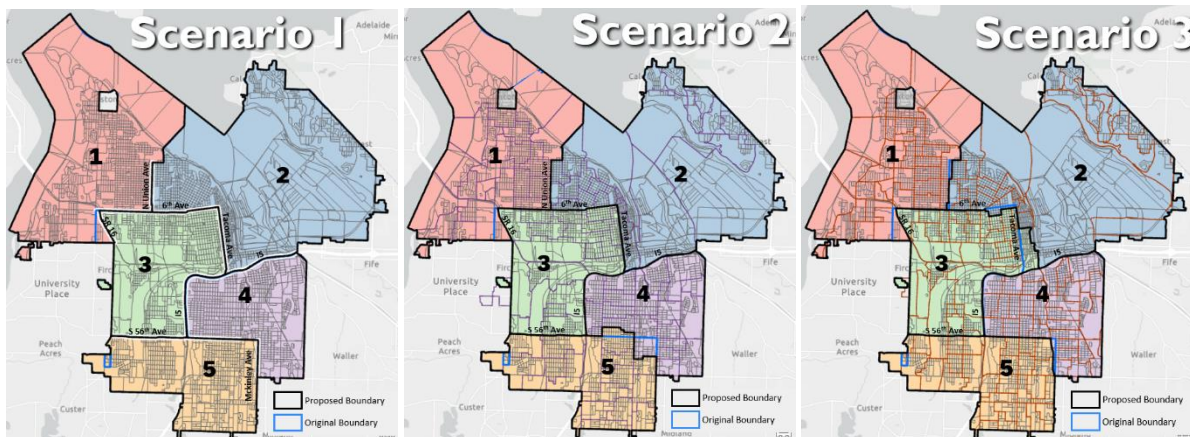
The proposed 2022 Council district map uses arterials and highways to create contiguous, recognizable districts. The proposal moves District 3’s western boundary east, from South Pearl Street to Highway 16, running from 6th Avenue to South 19th Street. This change lowers District 3’s population and grows District 1’s population so that both are within an acceptable range of the 43,957-population target. A small adjustment is also made to District 5 to account for the 2022 Manitou neighborhood annexation. District 5’s current boundary on 70th Street West moves north to form a continuous line at 64th Street West. Districts 2 and 4 remain unchanged. This proposal balances the growth disparity between District 1 and District 3, and presents a minimal amount of change from current district lines, with minimal disruption to community hubs.

¹ This process usually happens the year following completion of the U.S. Census, however states and local governments received 2021 Census data later than is customary due to the COVID-19 pandemic and political factors at the federal level. The Washington State Legislature amended state law to allow municipalities an extra year to complete redistricting.



BACKGROUND:

State and federal laws require cities to redistrict following completion of the U.S. Census. Washington State provides redistricting guidelines to local governments². These specify ensuring districts that are compact, contiguous, and convenient. In addition, redistricting should minimize splitting established boundaries (such as parks, business districts, neighborhood council districts, or arterials) and preserve community centers wherever possible. Undue favoritism to any one party or group is prohibited. Following this direction, the City’s Geographic Information Systems Department (GIS) modeled three draft maps using distinct methodologies. These methodologies are based on systemic, quantitative processes and were used in the City’s 2011 redistricting process. Each methodology uses existing boundaries to create clear, easily identifiable districts and balances population numbers accordingly.



Scenario 1 follows physical boundaries: arterials and highways as district lines. This scenario presents the least amount of change, is the most contiguous and has the most population balance between districts. Using arterials as district boundaries makes for clear, easily recognizable districts.

Scenario 2 follows state voting precincts: subdivisions of the State’s electoral districts. This scenario features changes in Districts 4 and 5 and presents some irregularly-shaped districts.

Scenario 3 follows federal Census block groups: lines used by the federal government to divide populations into equal areas. This scenario features changes Districts 4 and 5 and presents the most amount of change from the current district map. It also has the greatest amount of deviation from the target population goal of 43,957.

The City Council indicated a preference for Scenario 1 at the February 22, 2022 Study Session, and this was affirmed by the Government Performance and Finance Committee recommendation at the July 19 committee meeting.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ CUSTOMER RESEARCH:

The City launched a redistricting landing page and email in June 2022 where residents can access information on the redistricting process, draft maps and provide feedback. The February 22, 2022 Study Session presentation and July 19, 2022 Government Performance and Finance Committee presentation are also available on this page. The Communications and Media office launched a redistricting public service announcement on the City’s social media

² RCW 44.05.090



sites and TV Tacoma in September, which provides information on the redistricting process and how residents can share feedback and input. Information on the redistricting process, draft maps and opportunities to provide input has been provided to the City’s boards and commissions, neighborhood and community councils, and in Council publications. Redistricting was also featured on the October 2022 episode of *Inside Tacoma*.

2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Equity and Accessibility:

This legislation will ensure fair and equitable representation for Tacoma’s residents at the City Council level.

ALTERNATIVES:

Alternative(s)	Positive Impact(s)	Negative Impact(s)
1. No action	No disruption of existing and known district boundaries.	The city will be out of compliance with state and federal redistricting laws; district populations are uneven due to population shifts over the past decade.
2. Adopt Draft Map #2	As state electoral precinct lines are used to determine revised district boundaries, voter eligibility by district could be more easily generated.	This scenario creates irregularly shaped districts and features more changes than draft map #1, placing more residents into new districts.
3. Adopt Draft Map #3	Using federal census boundaries to redraw districts aligns this map with the Equity Index and facilitates generating population data for federal reporting requirements.	This scenario creates districts with the least amount of contiguity and the least amount of population balance across districts. It also presents the most amount of change from current district boundaries.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:

Please include what performance measures and/or benchmarks you have identified that indicate success. Explain how you will follow up with staff and/or Council to report success or changes.

STAFF/SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION:

The recommendation is to adopt the Scenario 1 draft map, which will make minor adjustments to Districts 1, 3 and 5 to account for population changes. Using this methodology to revise district lines according to population shifts will ensure fair and equitable representation for Tacoma residents at the City Council. This will also ensure the City complies with state and federal redistricting laws. Tacoma’s updated district map and adopted ordinance must be submitted to the Pierce County Auditor by November 15, 2022.



FISCAL IMPACT:

The draft map will be reviewed by an external consultant to ensure compliance with federal and state redistricting laws. The Government Relations Office’s budget was updated in 2021 to provide for this cost, for a total of \$70,000.

Fund Number & Name	COST OBJECT (CC/WBS/ORDER)	Cost Element	Total Amount
Fund 5800 – General Government Internal Services	Regional and State Legislative Priorities (598203)	Professional Services Expense (5310100)	\$70,000
TOTAL			

What Funding is being used to support the expense?

Are the expenditures and revenues planned and budgeted in this biennium’s current budget?

YES
Funding was allocated to the Government Relations Office 2022 budget for external consultation to ensure compliance with federal and state redistricting laws in the amount of \$70,000.

Are there financial costs or other impacts of not implementing the legislation?

YES

Will the legislation have an ongoing/recurring fiscal impact?

No

Will the legislation change the City’s FTE/personnel counts?

No