

Independent Citizen Redistricting Commission – the solution to drawing new City Council Districts

In 2021 the Fort Worth City Council is expanding by adding 2 new districts. ***Elected representatives should not be allowed to choose their voters.*** A group of independent citizens, after taking public input, should draw the most equitable council districts possible. There is a road map for an Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission that has been used in statewide elections in Arizona, California and 4 other states passed this initiative this past November. In 2014 the City of Austin used this process for their City Council districts.

Proposed Ballot Language

The commission shall adopt a final plan for the City of FW specifically describing the district boundaries. **The City Council may not change the plan. The plan shall have the force and effect of law.**

Why right now in Fort Worth?

- All council districts are to be redrawn after the 2020 census with the addition of 2 new seats.
- Race and Culture Task Force recommended this process – let's address those concerns and not ignore their work.
- This is a proven methodology that has had success across the country. We are not recreating the wheel.
- Total reconfiguration of the existing council districts when Fort Worth moves from 8 to 10 single member districts.
- In 2012 redistricting, "Incumbent Addresses" was one of the criteria considered. Politicians should not choose their voters.

District Boundary Criteria. To avoid favoring any special group of candidates districts shall:

- have reasonably equal population with other districts and be geographically contiguous and compact using existing election precincts and identifiable geographic boundaries.
- comply with the federal Voting Rights Act.
- respect the geographic integrity of any local neighborhood or local community of interest in a manner that minimizes their division. A community of interest is a contiguous population that shares common social and economic interests...
- **The place of residence of any incumbent or potential political candidate shall not be considered in the creation of a plan or any district.**

Commission Selection - In order to create a truly independent commission without bias or a political agenda:

- City of FW Auditor shall initiate and widely publicize an application process in a manner that promotes a large, diverse (by race, ethnicity, gender, and geography) qualified Applicant Review Panel and Commissioner Applicant Pool.
- Applicant Review Panel shall be made up of 3 independent Auditors drawn from the application pool.
 - o Panel shall ensure all applicants in Commissioner Applicant Pool fit commission member criteria.
 - o Panel shall select a pool of 60 applicants from the qualified applicants.
 - o City of FW Auditor shall draw by lottery 9 names – these 9 will serve on the commission.
 - o These 9 commissioners shall choose 6 additional applicants from the remaining pool to ensure diversity reflective of FW and at least one member from each existing Council district
 - o These 15 applicants shall make up the Citizens Redistricting Commission

Commission Member Criteria - In order to avoid any real or implied conflict of interest each commission member:

- be a voter continuously registered in the City of Fort Worth for the past 5 or more years.
- shall have voted in at least 3 of the last 5 City of FW general elections.
- be ineligible for 10 years to hold elective public office for the City of Fort Worth.
- be ineligible for 3 years to: **1)** to hold appointive public office for the City of FW, **2)** to serve as paid staff for or as a paid consultant to the City of FW, the City Council or any member of the City Council, **3)** to receive a non-competitively bid contract with the City of FW.
- Within 5-years either applicant or their spouse shall not have: **1)** Been appointed to, elected to, or have been a candidate for state or city office, **2)** Served as an officer, employee, or paid consultant of a political party or of the campaign committee of a candidate for elective state, county or city office, **3)** Been a registered state or local lobbyist **4)** Contributed or bundled \$1,000 or more in aggregate to candidates for City of FW elective office in the last city election
- Within 3 years not have been: **1)** a paid employee of the City of FW, **2)** person performing paid services under a professional or political contract to the City of FW, to the City Council, or to any member of the City Council, **3)** any controlling person of any such consultant **4)** or a spouse of any of the foregoing.

Activities and Approval - In order to effectively complete its goals with complete transparency and citizen input:

- Commission shall hire staff, legal counsel, and consultants as needed
- Commission shall establish and implement an open hearing process for public input
- Records of the commission and all data considered are public records
- Shall be at least 4 public hearings, geographically dispersed following the preliminary plan approval
- Public comment shall be taken for 14 days
- Commission shall vote on final plan and hold at least 2 public hearings, one north and one south
- Shall have 5 days for additional public comments
- Commission shall be done with hearings and adopt a final plan no later than November 1, 2021.