

RESPONSES FROM OTHER CITIES: DIRECTLY-ELECTED MAYOR POSITION AND COUNCILMEMBERS ELECTED BY DISTRICT

Question: If you are a city with a directly-elected mayor and council members elected by district, what are the pros and cons of this model?

Please note, the responses do not reflect any city's position, rather they are categorized by where the response came from.

Jurisdiction	Comment
Arroyo Grande	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have an elected Mayor position for a two year term. We do not have council districts. We have many controversial platform issues related to growth, housing, preservation of agriculture, traffic, and economic development. These issues tend to be "non-partisan," and that is how we conduct our campaigns. Candidates for Mayor and Council run on their viewpoints relative to the foregoing issues, rather than political affiliation. Further, these issues affect our entire urban area as well as our rural fringe. As such, we have not and probably won't establish council districts. Feel we have a good system in place. By allowing open participation on important issues, we don't promote "turf battles" nor do we experience unfair influence from individual districts that might have a stronger economic or population base. We also don't have to contend with choosing council candidates from a designated district, which in our city, is a limitation we can live without.
Beverly Hills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directly-elected Mayors may behave as though they have two votes and a level of entitlement to staff.
Colton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We were at large and went to districts. I loved before I became a councilman and will fight to keep this way if any one tries to change it back. I can give you overwhelming reasons to do this and only a few not.
Corning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit the City's ability to recruit the best elected officials. • In another City with serious racial issues, they had always elected district candidates at large (all city voters choose each district's council member). A civil rights suit was filed and the federal government settled with the city after the requirement was imposed limiting the district candidate choice to district voters only. Someone else will have to draw the correlation between this change and that community's economic deterioration. • Imagine having to redistrict after each census. • Districts cause the Balkanization of the Community. • In County Government there is a long tradition of district representation and it creates what one County Supervisor and former City Mayor called "little fiefdoms" each presided over jealously by its prince. Budgets must be properly distributed to insure each fiefdom benefits equally rather than by City priority. Each prince must have their own cash discretionary fund to be able to respond to special interests quickly without regard to real Community priorities.
Daley City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes directly-elected mayor and "ward" council members can become about deal making for their own ward with no attention to the larger issues and rife with petty politics and public acrimony.

Downey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regarding a separately elected Mayor: my perception is that this works for larger cities, but not for smaller ones. I don't know where the demarcation is, but I'll throw out a population base of 200,000. I suspect that not having a directly-elected Mayor allows for the possibility of the City Manager assuming greater power. Regarding Councilmanic districts: again, in large cities, they appear to be a necessity. In smaller cities, they can (a) provide a lower threshold of campaign expense for candidates (fewer mailings, yard signs, and doors to knock), and (b) possibly allow "minority" candidates an advantage. Once in office, the Councilmember likely directs his/her attention largely to that district.
Escondido	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We do not have districts and I would not support district elections as I feel our city is small enough that at-large councilmembers serve all the people properly and effectively.
Fremont	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directly-elected Mayor's term should be 4 years. Two year terms are too short to get the benefit of a good Mayor on the regional, State and national level. Electing council members "by districts" gives you the "benefit" of many mayors instead of just one. "Elected from Districts" maintains a stronger sense of the common good while frustrating some locals with local issues.
Fullerton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no pros to this model, only cons.....
Glenora	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggest you contact the City of Redlands in San Bernardino County. They went to this model about 20 years ago so they should have some good history. The impetus for the change was allegations that minority groups were not being properly represented, that some areas of the city got all the good stuff while the poorer areas got nothing. Recall that there was quite a controversy over the entire issue with outside advocates for the change etc.
ICMA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worked in a city with blended plan where the mayor and two council members were elected at-large and the other four by districts. The blended plan was the best demonstration of the strengths of the at-large system and the weaknesses in the district system. The two at-large members and the Mayor were the "statesmen". They thought big and thought about the best interests of the whole community. The other four thought often thought first about their own districts and quickly learned that "deal-making" was the way to get things done.
La Mesa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has a directly elected Mayor, but the other four Council Members are elected "at large". For a City that is geographically as small as La Mesa (approximately 9.3 square miles) it would be difficult to create districts that require individual Council representation. The ability of all Council Members, as well as the Mayor to represent all of the La Mesa residents and property owners equally provides for a very effective and responsive form of local government.
Lancaster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The pros of a directly-elected Mayor are that it is clear to the community who will serve in that capacity for the two or four year term, whichever your community might select. The media clearly identifies that person as the contact on most City related issues. City Council Members no longer need to jockey for position to become Mayor other than through the ballot process. The cons of a directly-elected Mayor are for one, there is a perceived greater power attributed to the Mayor than the other Council Members when, in fact, their vote carries the same weight.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Again, another con is that the City Council can have difficulties, especially when a minority view is represented by the Mayor. The dissention among Council Members can become very political and there is no way for four Council Members to remove or replace the Council Member representing them as Mayor without the dramatic recall process. • A directly-elected Mayor can feel obligated to attend every function and make every presentation when those duties previously would have been shared by other Council Members. This burden is maybe self-inflicted by a Mayor believing he must do all this work, whereas in a Council selection system duties are more easily delegated to others. Clearly, the directly-elected Mayor becomes the focal point of all the praise and criticism.
Los Gatos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a five-member Town Council, all elected at-large. Terms are four years, no term limits. Elections are even years, and terms are staggered, so that each election either two or three seats are up. The Town Council chooses the Mayor and Vice Mayor from the Town Council members at the second meeting in November. If there was an election, this is after the election, but before the newly elected members are seated in December. The Mayor and Vice Mayor serve one-year terms. It is customary that the Vice Mayor become Mayor, and that the new Vice mayor be the most senior council member who has not yet served in the role. If seniority is a tie, custom is that the highest vote-getter goes first. The "old" Mayor "goes to the back end of the line." The goal is continuity and collegiality, and this method has served us well for many decades.
Marysville	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The only problem we ran up against was when our Mayor resigned and I was appointed the "acting" Mayor. 2 of the 4 councilmembers left didn't think my seat, (council) was vacant, but that the Mayors was and I was only there as a Temp. We never addressed this in our charter; this is being changed this November by the voters.
Monterey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monterey has a directly elected mayor and has used this system since statehood. The mayoral term is 2 years, while the council terms are 4. This used to create a problem with councilmembers in a safe seat running for mayor, knowing that if they lost, they still had a seat on the council. If they won, they had to be replaced. We amended the charter some years back, and now if a safe seat member runs for mayor, they forfeit their council seat and it is filled at the same election. • I can't comment on the pro's or con's, other than to state the obvious that if the CC appoints one of their own to sit as mayor, there are going to be extensive political "favors" to be repaid by those supporting the mayor's appointment. That can be good or bad depending on a number of factors, such as public exposure of promises gone bad, etc., some of which drag staff into the middle of the mess, either as witnesses or referees. The elected scenario makes the mayor accountable only to the voters, not the other councilmembers.
Monterey Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have found the majority of the council not caring what happens outside their area and then you have a real nightmare of issues cropping up.
Napa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Napa has a directly-elected Mayor with Councilmembers at-large, and there are not district elections. The system has worked fine for many years.

Pacifica	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directly-elected Mayor could think they are in control of both the City Manager and the City Council. • Councils elected by district might lose sight of the whole city and focus on getting reelected by their district. This could lead to "deal making".
Pasadena	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forwarded material.
Redding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council could come to meetings with their own agenda for individual districts. • Could bring politics into hiring.
Redlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A very small number of people can elect someone from their district yet that person represents the whole city on budget and other decisions. • Because of the small number needed for election, it is easier for a special interest group to capture one or two seats compared to having to face citywide voter turnout. • The district delineation process, even at the city level, proved very political. Initial boundaries were drawn based on no particular agenda, but we did have a redistricting.
Rancho Mirage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unless you have an identifiable under represented minority group/community in your city, there is really no legal reason to have district elections. • It is very expensive to adjust the boundaries every couple years to accommodate shifts in population of voters amongst the districts. • Once a community moves to a directly elected Mayor – there is no turning back. I believe there is a provision in the Government Code that provides directly elected mayor with some additional authority than an appointed mayor -- albeit not much more.
Rancho Palos Verdes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mistake to change to a directly-elected mayor, unless your city is a plus 100,000 or more pop. City.
San Diego	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With district elections the pros are: greater access by constituents to their elected representatives and more accountability by them to constituents. • The cons: balkanization, competition over resources between districts and the structure puts far greater strain on City management under a council-manager form of government, especially if you have a Charter with a "non-interference" clause. The strain, of course, is caused by the elected officials trying very hard to satisfy the demands of constituents. I think under a district election system for council members, a mayor who is elected citywide (with strongish power to at least control the docket) is almost a necessity to help counterbalance the districts.
Torrance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support directly-elected Mayor because the competition for this high office, which fundamentally sets a method of operation, is best left to the public sector. • Oppose councilmembers elected by district because they have their own interests.
Tracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tracy has a directly-elected Mayor with a two year term. No districts. Council has staggered four year terms. Upside for voters - they get to directly elect the mayor AND a majority of seats (two council plus mayor) is up for election every two years. Downside -- Mayor has to run every two years -- can be lots of effort for a two year term when for same

	amount of effort you can have a four year term as council member.
Ukiah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a directly-elected mayor with a two year term. The major con is that seated councilmembers have repeatedly sought that position, leaving an unexpired term to fill by appointment. If the goal is to give voters the right to select the mayor, the unintended consequence has been to deprive voters of the right to select a councilmember. The mayor's role is largely ceremonial outside presiding at council meetings. • At a minimum, I recommend making the term for elected mayor four years, not two.
General comments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mayor would be appointed by a council majority to serve a one year. This appointment can, of course, be viewed as a popularity contest depending on the personalities and personal agendas of the council and cause some "back scratching" and political maneuvering by the various council members seeking the appointment. On the other hand, there could be rotation system developed based on seniority. Again, who gets appointed would depend on the personalities involved. If the council is united as a team and acts only in the best interests of the city, then it matters now who the mayor is.