



Shane G. Smith, Ph.D.
Member
Independent Districting Advisory Committee
City of Merced

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Chairperson Cindy Morse
Downtown Neighborhood Association
dnamerced@gmail.com

Re: Request for Information Regarding City Council Election Districts

Dear Ms. Morse,

As a member of the Independent Districting Advisory Committee, I thank the Downtown Neighborhood Association for its passionate engagement in the City Council districting process. It is evident from your professional and thoughtful presentations that you and your colleagues care deeply about how the new district lines will impact the downtown area. Our Committee shares your attention to this issue.

As you know, in September the Committee will recommend that City Council adopt one of two district maps submitted by the Merced community. That will be an important step in a process initiated by the passage of Measure T last November, when City voters approved a switch from the “at-large” election of City Council members to “by-district” elections. Measure T, the City’s preceding settlement agreement with plaintiffs represented by MALDEF, and information presented by the Committee to Merced residents about the districting process all state that the City south of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe rail line near 24th Street will be divided into three districts while three other districts will fall entirely to the north of those tracks.

DNA has proposed that the Committee instead use Bear Creek as the midline for the City’s district map. We have accepted that idea for consideration just as we have all ideas and map proposals from around Merced.

I expect the Committee to address map proposals that do not follow the guidelines set out in Measure T and the MALDEF settlement agreement at our next public meeting. That meeting will commence Tuesday, August 4 at 6:30 p.m. in City Council Chambers. During the public comment portion of that meeting, it would be helpful to learn DNA’s view on how the Committee might best keep the downtown area together in a map that nonetheless uses the Santa Fe tracks as the midline. I hope you or a representative of DNA can present that view to us.

Sincerely yours,

Shane G. Smith
Member, Independent Districting Advisory Committee of the City of Merced