



## City of Amarillo Charter Review Committee Criteria in Establishing Council Geographic Area Residency Requirements

The Charter Review Committee for the City of Amarillo, Texas, recommends revising the City Charter to increase the Amarillo City Council from five members to seven members with elections continuing to be held in May of odd numbered years. The Mayor and Councilmembers will be elected via citywide ballot using the following structure.

- A. The Mayor will be elected in a citywide election on an at-large basis, meaning that he or she may live in any area of the city.
- B. At-large Councilmembers, Places 1, 3, (5) will also be elected on an at-large basis and may live in any area of the city.
- C. Councilmember residency requirements: The Councilmembers elected in Places 2, 4, (5), and 6 must live within one of the three or four geographic areas established by the City Council.

The following criteria should be considered when establishing City Council geographic areas and creating the boundaries of new Councilmember residency areas or places.

### **Councilmember District Criteria**

1. Districts shall be made nearly equal in population as practical, according to the 2020 federal census. In no event should the total population deviation between the largest and the smallest district exceed ten percent as compared to the ideal district size.
2. Any plan must follow the Federal Voting Rights Act<sup>1</sup> and other applicable federal or state laws. Any plan should follow applicable federal and state court decisions, such as *Shaw v Reno 509 US 630 (1993)* which held that redistricting based on race must be held to a standard of strict scrutiny under the equal protection clause. On the other hand, bodies doing redistricting must be conscious of race to the extent that they must ensure compliance with the Voting Rights Act of 1965.
3. Easily identifiable geographic boundaries shall be followed. Consideration shall be given to natural boundaries and streets, keeping cohesive neighborhoods together and avoiding splitting neighborhoods. Where possible, neighborhood associations shall be kept in one Council area. Gerrymandering of any type or for any purpose shall be avoided.
4. Districts shall be compact and composed of contiguous territory. Compactness may have a functional, as well as a geographical dimension. Attention shall be given to the cohesiveness, contiguity, and integrity of the area. The importance of public facilities such as schools, parks, and libraries, etc., to an area shall be recognized.
5. Communities of interest – including cultural, racial, ethnic, and economic interests – shall be kept whenever possible in a single Council area.
6. Councilmember areas shall be composed of whole voting precincts. Where this is not possible or practical, areas shall be drawn up considering county election precincts. Avoid splitting census blocks unless necessary.
7. The plan shall not fragment a geographically compact minority community or pack minority voters in the presence of polarized voting or otherwise discriminate against protected groups to create liability under the Voting Rights Act.

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<sup>1</sup> The Voting Rights Act of 1965 “outlawed the discriminatory voting practices adopted in many southern states” that limited the rights of African American voters. Source: National Archives, Voting Rights Act (1965), <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/voting-rights-act>.