

May 2017

Birthstone: Emerald  
Flower: Lily of the Valley

# Pathfinder



CITY OF SANTA MARIA EMPLOYEE NEWSLETTER



## *A few words from your City Manager*

Rick Haydon



**Word has it that the City's future will be reshaped by two initiatives that are well underway and that's a correct statement. The proverbial train has left the station. One project is to convert Santa Maria City Council elections to a district-based process. The other is to curtail violence among at-risk youth and their families.**

Earlier this week, the City Council chose the final map boundaries for district elections, and will make the decision final on May 16<sup>th</sup>. That is quick work, by design to avoid costly litigation. The City Council on February 21<sup>st</sup> launched the process to convert its elections from the at-large voting system which has been in place since the City's incorporation in 1905, to a district-based election system, where a candidate must live in the district he or she wishes to represent.

Starting in November 2018, Santa Maria voters will participate in the first district-based election when two City Council seats will be up for election. That will be followed in November 2020 by the remaining two district seats and the Mayor's position.

When it's all said and done, the City will have four distinct districts for future City Council elections. Each district will include a portion of the Downtown Specific Plan, and the Mayor's position will still be elected at-large by all voters.

Claremont-based National Demographics Corporation (NDC) was hired by the City as a consultant to help develop the draft district maps. A series of public hearings were held this year about district elections.

The City encouraged residents to submit draft maps for consideration. A total of 12 maps were submitted by residents. The City has been transparent about this process, posting information on its website at [www.cityofsantamaria.org/districtelections](http://www.cityofsantamaria.org/districtelections).

It is worth noting that approximately 70 percent of Santa Maria residents are Latino, and unlike other cities where at-large elections have prevented Latinos from electing candidates of their choice, the election history for Santa Maria City Council demonstrates that Latino candidates have been regularly elected. Since 1996, at least one Latino has been elected to the City Council in each election except the November 2012 election. In all, 10 Latinos have been elected to the City Council in the last 20 years. In addition, partly because of appointments made by the City Council to fill unexpired terms, the City Council has been represented by a Latino majority from 2002 until 2010 and, in fact, the current City Council is a Latino elected majority.

The other initiative is the Mayor's Task Force on Youth Safety, aimed at creating a strategy to improve the lives of at-risk youth and their families, through a blend of prevention, suppression, intervention, and re-entry. This is another step being taken by the City to curtail youth violence in the Santa Maria Valley, and to create a strategy of positive, long-lasting opportunities for at-risk youth.

We are modeling our program after successful approaches from other California cities. Our intent is to leverage existing resources and develop strategic partnerships within the Santa Maria Valley. Task Force agendas and materials are posted on the City's website at [www.cityofsantamaria.org/mayorstaskforce](http://www.cityofsantamaria.org/mayorstaskforce).

*Rick*