The Center for
Voting and Democracy

This Manual is intended to assist Charter Review Comissions, city officials, and other community leaders in determining what electoral systems will best meet the needs and goals of their community. Given that no system can accomplish every goal, this manual will help you analyze the consequences of adopting one system over another and will aid you in comparing the features of various electoral systems.

Should you desire more information about any of the voting systems discussed within this manual, please do not hesitate to contact us.

City Council Election Methods

INTRODUCTION

The range of options that exists for electing a municipal government is broader than many people realize. Voting systems can have a striking impact on the type of candidates who run for office, how representative the council is, which candidates are elected, which parties control the city council, which voters feel well represented, and so on. This booklet is intended to aid in the evaluation of possible city council election methods in order to ensure that the election method is determined by conscious choice, not inertia. A separate companion booklet, **Mayoral Election Methods**, deals with the selection of an executive.

A summary of this booklet can be found in the city council election method evaluation grid at Page 11.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING CITY COUNCIL ELECTION METHODS

It is important to recognize from the outset that no election method is perfect. Enhancing electoral performance in one area will sometimes weaken it in another. Choosing an election method requires setting priorities for various criteria and making trade-offs. Depending on your criteria, some election methods are far superior to others.

This first section sets forth 18 criteria for evaluating a city council election method. Most people will agree that all are real concerns, although they may disagree about their relative importance. In the following section 19 different election methods are scored on a scale from -2 to +2 on how well they perform on each of the criteria. The assigned scores necessarily contain an element of subjectivity, and it should not be assumed, for example, that a score of +2 is precisely twice as good as a +1.

1. Voter Choice
2. Competitive Races
3. Preventing "Spoiler" and "Sponge" Problems
4. Minimizing Wasted Votes
5. Majority Rule
6. Representativeness
7. Minority Inclusion
8. Resistance to Gerrymandering
9. Opportunity to Serve
10. Constituent Connection
11. Accountability
12. Balancing Stability and Responsiveness
13. Balancing Neighborhoods and the City
14. Issues Focused Campaigns
15. Manageable Campaign Costs
16. Ease of Voter Use
17. Voter Participation
18. Ease of Administration

1. VOTER CHOICE

Different election methods will encourage different numbers of candidates to run, and will thus impact the level of choice which voters have in choosing a city council. An election method should encourage enough candidates to compete in order for voters to feel they have real choices. Some voters will see any two candidates as representing a real choice, while others will see those same candidates as merely "Tweedle-Dum and Tweedle-Dee." Some voters are motivated by the desire to vote defensively and block a candidate they oppose, while others participate only if there is a candidate who they admire and find inspiring. It is impossible to set an optimum number of candidates. A single choice is clearly not sufficient, but the effort to become informed about huge numbers of candidates may be daunting for some voters. As consumers, voters are able to choose among a wide range of automobiles or toothpaste brands, and consequently having only two options at the polls can seem inadequate. Election methods that encourage very large numbers of candidates generally have to rely on slates or political party labels to help guide voters.

2. COMPETITIVE RACES

Different election methods can increase or decrease the likelihood of competitive races. A wide field of candidates does not guarantee competition if most of the candidates have no chance of winning. In some systems, knowledge of past voting patterns can be used to predict a winner even before candidates are announced. A competitive race is one in which it cannot be assumed which candidate will win, and voters genuinely believe their votes might make the difference in the outcome. Methods with few competitive races shift the real selection process to the nomination procedure. This may be more or less transparent (nomination by primary, party caucus, petition, etc.), and involves significantly fewer voters.

3. PREVENTING "SPOILER" AND "SPONGE" PROBLEMS

Under some systems, the mere presence of a minor additional candidate may reverse or "spoil" the outcome of an election by splitting the majority vote. The risk that by voting for a favorite candidate, a voter might actually help elect the candidate the voter most disapproves of, frustrates many voters. Election methods with this "spoiler" problem are also open to intentional manipulation through the recruiting of candidates purely in order to capture some of the opposition vote. In some multi-seat systems, having too *few* candidates in a slate can also result in undemocratic defeats, as supporters' remaining votes may go to candidates in an opposing slate. Such systems encourage filling slates with token "sponge" candidates to soak up stray votes of supporters.

4. MINIMIZING WASTED VOTES

The adjective "wasted" is not used judgmentally. The term is employed by political scientists to describe "votes that are not necessary to elect a candidate." For example, in a winner-takes-all race, if Candidate A wins with 53% of the vote and Candidate B receives 47% of the vote, those 47% were "wasted." In multi-seat systems, "wasted" votes can also refer to surplus votes above the winning threshold received by a winning candidate that could have gone to elect another candidate preferred by those voters. Under this definition, winner-take-all election methods result in at least half of all voters casting wasted votes, while many proportional methods have drastically lower rates of vote-wastage. In such systems most voters manage to elect at least one of their favorite candidates. Methods that produce many wasted votes discourage participation and undermine voters' sense of ownership of government.

5. MAJORITY RULE

Majority rule is a fundamental principle of representative government. The principle can be applied both to individual races and to the makeup of the council as a whole. Ironically, most of the election methods used in the United States do not actually adhere to this principle. Plurality elections, "spoilers," and gerrymandered districts can allow a minority of voters to overwhelm the majority. In a good election system the constituency that is a majority of the voting population should elect a majority of the council, as well as the executive.

6. REPRESENTATIVENESS

In a statement that applies equally well to the election of a city council as to that of Congress, John Adams, the second president of the United States, wrote:

> *"The principal difficulty lies, and the greatest care should be employed in constituting this representative assembly. It should be in miniature an exact portrait of the people at large. It should think, feel, reason and act like them. That it may be the interest of the assembly to do strict justice at all times, it should be an equal representation, or, in other words, equal interests among the people should have equal interests in it."*

This principle can apply to partisan elections, and non-partisan elections alike. Imagine a city where 60% of voters favor group A and 40% favor group B. Some election methods would tend to create a council in which 100% of the seats are filled by group A councilors, while other methods would tend to create a council where 60% of the seats are filled by group A councilors and 40% are filled by group B, more accurately reflecting the electorate.

A representative election method will assure not simply that the majority rules, but also that other substantial parties or groups get a voice on the council with a share of seats in rough proportion to their percentage of support among the voters. Voters feel well represented when they have helped elect a councilor who votes as they would. Voters who fail to elect a candidate of their choice may not feel represented at all.

7. MINORITY INCLUSION

This criterion is related to "representativeness" but primarily applies to groups, such as racial or linguistic minorities, not

necessarily represented by a political party or similar civic organization. "Descriptive representation" can provide both important symbolic and substantive improvements in representation of minorities. Some election methods allow for the creation of "majority-minority districts" designed to facilitate minority victories. Yet, these can reduce the overall representativeness of a council, as surrounding districts may be captured by the opposition party. The federal Voting Rights Act is intended to protect certain racial, ethnic and linguistic minorities from election methods that dilute their ability to elect representatives of their choice, although the Act is generally not interpreted to mandate proportional outcomes.

8. RESISTANCE TO GERRYMANDERING
To maintain roughly equal ratios of residents to councilors in the face of demographic shifts, election methods that divide a city into districts must periodically adjust district boundaries. The smaller the size of the district, the more prone the election method is to strategic manipulation through packing or splitting of like-minded voters. The result of gerrymandering is not just partisan advantage for one side, but also frequently the predominance of "safe" one-party districts without meaningful competition. U.S. Supreme Court rulings prohibit using race as a primary factor in drawing district boundaries, either for enhancing or thwarting minority election opportunities, but partisan and incumbent protection considerations are allowed.

9. OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE
Ideally, a resident with the qualities necessary to be a good city councilor should have some chance to be elected, regardless of the neighborhood he or she lives in. Some election methods create "orphaned" voters and candidates, living in districts where a candidate of their party can never win, even if there is plenty of support city-wide. The community loses when high-caliber candidates are denied opportunity to serve on the council.

10. CONSTITUENT CONNECTION
Does the election method encourage voters to feel a connection to one of their city councilors, such that they feel comfortable contacting him or her, and confident that their opinions will be taken into consideration if they do so?

11. ACCOUNTABILITY
Elections are supposed to give voters the chance to hold elected officials accountable for their performance. It is important that the electorate have genuine choices and a viable alternative to the incumbent. However, gerrymandered "safe" seats, strong incumbency protection, and a lack of alternative candidates with any chance of winning, can reduce or eliminate accountability. Systems that promote "safe" seats and weak accountability can allow the election of low-caliber candidates, merely because they are of the "right" party.

12. BALANCING STABILITY AND RESPONSIVENESS
While criterion 11 refers to individual councilors, this related criterion refers to the council as a whole. Stability and responsiveness are opposing, yet desirable characteristics that ideally should counter-balance each other. Having either one in excess can be problematic. With too much stability, a city government becomes ossified and voters become apathetic. With too much responsiveness, tiny changes in public opinion may result in wide swings in governance and public policy, undercutting long-term planning. The balance is also affected by factors unrelated to the choice of election method. Having staggered or very long terms decreases responsiveness, but may also increase stability. While a single election may result in a switch of partisan control of a council, evidence overwhelmingly indicates that when federal, state, and city council seats come up for election at one time, mass turnovers that could threaten institutional memory almost never occur, with or without staggered terms.

13. BALANCING NEIGHBORHOODS AND THE CITY

It is significant that different neighborhoods have fair representation in municipal election systems, since city governments control the geographic distribution of resources (parks, road repairs, etc.). Yet tight neighborhood districting can foster a parochial balkanization where neighborhoods are set against each other, thus forfeiting a citywide perspective. Election methods that encourage domination by one party per district can be particularly problematic since they can create a dynamic where none of the councilors of a particular party have concern about the needs of residents in districts in which that party can't win any seats. Some election methods allow parties to essentially write off certain parts of the city. Ideally, every party (though not necessarily every councilor) should have an interest in appealing to voters in all neighborhoods. To achieve a good compromise, some cities use several multi-seat districts, rather than a single, citywide district. 7

14. ISSUES FOCUSED CAMPAIGNS

Campaigns in many cities are sometimes reduced to character assassinations. Election methods can reward negative campaign strategies, or alternatively encourage a focus on policy issues. When campaigns revolve around policy debate, the public not only gets to choose a city's direction at that moment, but also they become better informed about underlying issues, and consequently able to make judgments about policy choices that arise in the future. Campaigns that revolve around personalities do little to steer the city or prepare voters to assess future policy choices that may arise.

15. MANAGEABLE CAMPAIGN COSTS

Campaign costs should be manageable rather than minimal. Any system where candidates have little incentive to spend the money necessary to make the public aware of their positions on important issues is undesirable. Uncontested races, for instance, would ensure that costs were as low as possible, but would be unsatisfactory for this reason. On the other hand, excessively costly campaigns can exclude qualified candidates who lack access to money. Contrary to many people's assumptions, smaller districts are not necessarily correlated with lower campaign costs. Some election methods using larger multi-member districts can encourage the sharing of costs among a slate of candidates, and actually result in lower expenditures per candidate than single-seat districts.

16. EASE OF VOTER USE

Voter effort is increased by methods requiring voters to evaluate a high number of candidates or understand a complex ballot. Some election methods are also less intuitive than others, and may require more voter education, especially as new voters, unfamiliar with a city's election method, vote for the first time. However, just as a person can use a telephone without understanding the wiring and electronics inside, real-world experience suggests none of these election methods are at a level of complexity that voters can't readily learn to use them. Many voters in jurisdictions with more involved election methods actually prefer them. Thus, greater ease of use should not be confused with greater voter satisfaction.

17. VOTER PARTICIPATION

Voter participation or "turnout" is an important indicator of a democracy's health. The United States ranks near the bottom – 139th among nations of the world – in voter turnout in national elections. Turnout in municipal elections is even lower – dipping into single digit percentages in many U.S. cities. Voter turnout is closely correlated with the incentives created for political groups to mobilize their supporters and with voters' perceptions of whether or not their votes are important, meaningful, and effective. How important an election is (electing a dog-catcher vs. a president, or a figure-head mayor vs. a powerful mayor) is not affected by the election method. However, election methods can determine how "meaningful" and "effective" a citizen's vote is, and consequently can influence voter participation.

An "effective" vote in political science terms is one cast for a winning candidate. Voters who always vote for candidates who lose often give up participating. In a non-competitive district

consistently won by candidates of a particular party, however, even an "effective" vote may not be "meaningful." A "meaningful" vote is one where the outcome of an election may actually depend on whether the voter participates. For example, a race with only a single candidate, or where everyone can correctly predict a landslide winner, does not encourage participation since voters may not feel their vote is "meaningful." Voter turnout is greatly influenced by how well an election method satisfies the criteria above.

18. EASE OF ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

All else being equal, election methods that are simpler and less costly to administer are better. But it is rarely the case that all else is equal. While election administrators naturally tend to elevate this criterion to a paramount position, policy makers should resist the temptation to defer to their preferences. If better, more democratic election methods involve more preparation or effort on the part of those conducting the election, this may be a worthwhile trade-off. Campaigns in many cities are sometimes reduced to character assassinations. Election methods can reward negative campaign strategies, or alternatively encourage a focus on policy issues. When campaigns revolve around policy debate, the public not only gets to choose a city's direction at that moment, but also they become better informed about underlying issues, and consequently able to make judgments about policy choices that arise in the future. Campaigns that revolve around personalities do little to steer the city or prepare voters to assess future policy choices that may arise.

ELECTION METHODS

This section describes a range of election methods that can be used for electing a city council. This analysis does not deal with certain other variables that can have an impact on election of a city council, such as partisan vs. nonpartisan elections, modes of nomination, and city manager vs. mayoral systems. It should also be noted that some of these election methods may be combined (for example, having some at-large seats elected by cumulative voting, with other seats elected from single-member districts with runoffs).

The election methods described in the next section can be classified into three broad categories. Election methods 1-9 are "winner-take-all" methods, 10-13 are "semi-proportional" methods, and 14-19 are "full representation," also called "proportional" methods.

1. Single-Member District - plurality (SMP)
2. Single-Member District - majority - separate runoff (SMR)
3. Single-Member District - majority - instant runoff (SMI)
4. City-wide At-Large - plurality (CAP)
5. City-wide Designated Seats - plurality (CDP)
6. City-wide At-large- majority by separate runoff (CAR)
7. City-wide Designated Seats - majority by runoff (CDR)
8. Multi-Member Districts - plurality (MDP)
9. Mixed (at large and districts) - plurality (MXP)
10. Cumulative - At-Large (CUA)
11. Cumulative - Multi-Member Districts (CUD)
12. Limited - At Large (LAL)
13. Limited - Multi-Member Districts (LMD)
14. Choice - At-Large (CHA)
15. Choice - Multi-Member Districts (CHD)
16. Optional Party - Multi-Member Districts (OPD)
17. Party List - Open (PLO)
18. Party List - Closed (PLC)
19. Mixed Member Proportional (MMP)

A brief explanation and analysis of these 19 options according the criteria outlined above follows. There is a summary table at the centerfold of this booklet.

1. Single-Member District - plurality (SMP)

This is the most common election method in the United States. Cities are divided into electoral districts, and only voters living in a given district may vote for the candidates, who must also reside within the district. Whichever candidate receives the most votes in a district is declared the winner, even if that candidate received less than 50% of the votes cast. As dealt with here, SMP covers elections in which a single seat is up for election at a time in each district, even if the district has more than one seat, with staggered terms (and thus is not literally "single-member.") New York City is an example of a city that uses SMP.

1. **Voter Choice** (-2) Due to a combination of safe seat gerrymandering and concern about the spoiler-effect of having more than two candidates, SMP tends to restrict voter choice, with single candidate elections being commonplace.
2. **Competitive Races** (-1) Either through natural division along neighborhood boundaries, or as a result of intentional gerrymandering SMP elections tend to result in limited choices and few competitive races, although occasional political or demographic shifts result in brief periods of competitive contention in given districts. Occasional spoiler situations can also create unexpectedly competitive races.
3. **Preventing "Spoiler" and "Sponge" Problems** (-2) Whenever more than an optimal number of candidates who appeal to the same constituency run, there is a risk of a spoiler dynamic.
4. **Minimizing Wasted Votes** (-2) SMP generally produces the highest ratio of wasted votes of any method. Since a candidate can win with less than half the votes, it often happens that a majority of voters waste their votes.
5. **Majority Rule** (-2) Since candidates can win with less than half the votes under SMP, gerrymandering and/or spoiler scenarios allow a minority of voters to defeat the will of the majority, both within a district and city-wide.
6. **Representativeness** (-1) SMP is not designed to reflect all views within a given district or entire community. Instead, the largest block of voters can win a disproportionate share or even sweep 100% of the seats.
7. **Minority Inclusion** (0) Minority candidates may win when district boundaries are drawn favorably (so long as the minority is geographically concentrated), or as a result of a spoiler scenario, but this is not assured by SMP. Ironically, the creation of so-called "majority-minority districts" may allow the election of minorities but also actually reduce the overall

representativeness of a council as the surrounding districts become safe seats for an opposing party.

8. **Resistance to Gerrymandering** (-2) SMP is particularly vulnerable to manipulation through gerrymandering.
9. **Opportunity to Serve** (-2) Candidates from across the city will serve, but 'orphaned" candidates who would be superior councilors but happen to live in unfavorable districts are essentially precluded from serving on the council.
10. **Constituent Connection** (0) Many people assume single-member districts encourage a strong connection between councilors and constituents, because the small geographic area increases the chances for personal contact. While this is partially true, it is frequently counter-balanced by the fact that a substantial portion of the electorate (even a majority in the case of a multi-candidate race) may strongly oppose the winning candidate, and feel no connection at all.
11. **Accountability** (-2) As a result of gerrymandering (and homogeneous neighborhoods) SMP tends to create safe-seat fiefdoms with incumbents in most districts rarely threatened by voter accountability.
12. **Balancing Stability and Responsiveness** (-1) With a preponderance of gerrymandered safe seats, SMP tends to be overly stable. However, because of the winner-take-all nature of this method, relatively small shifts in public support can occasionally result in dramatic shifts in council makeup. This periodic hyper-responsiveness of SMP is rather crude – more akin to the suddenness of an on or off light switch, than a gradual dimmer switch.
13. **Balancing Neighborhoods and the City** (-2) SMP can fuel inter-neighborhood battles over access to city resources. Candidates tend to be rewarded for parochialism over "big picture" perspective.
14. **Issues Focused Campaigns** (-1) Because SMP tends to have single candidate or two candidate races, personality-focused campaigns and personal attacks are more likely than under other many other methods.
15. **Manageable Campaign Costs** (+2)The overall cost of campaigning is generally modest due to the small number of voters needing to be mobilized, and the low number of candidates.
16. **Ease of Voter Use** (+1) SMP is one of the simplest election methods. The only difficulty is that some voters face a quandary about whether to vote for a favorite candidate, or a less preferred choice who may have a better chance to defeat a strongly opposed candidate.
17. **Voter Participation** (-1) For reasons discussed above, SMP generally has low voter turnout. With some districts having little or no competition, overall city turnout is reduced even if some districts have hotly contested races with relatively high turnout.
18. **Ease of Administration** (+2) SMP is among the simplest systems to administer, with the only complexity being the number of different ballots that are required.

2. Single-Member District - majority - separate runoff (SMR)

This method is the same as SMP, except that if a winning threshold of 50% is not surpassed, the top two candidates in a district face off in a subsequent runoff election. Another variant treats the first round of voting as a primary to reduce the field to just two finalists for the subsequent round of voting. SMR does *not* include election methods that set a winning threshold lower than 50%. Cities where a runoff only occurs if no candidate gains more than 40% of the vote, for instance, resemble SMP more than SMR, except for being somewhat harder to administer. Examples of cities using SMR are Los Angeles, and Chicago.

1. **Voter Choice** (+1) Because SMR alleviates the spoiler concern, more candidates are willing to offer themselves than under SMP.
2. **Competitive Races** (-1) Although the "spoiler" disincentive is removed, encouraging more candidates to run, gerrymandering or simple demographics tends to minimizes truly competitive races. The elimination of the spoiler dynamic may result in a more crowded and competitive first round, and a non-competitive runoff.
3. **Preventing "Spoiler" and "Sponge" Problems** (+2) Runoffs are designed to eliminate the spoiler dynamic, allowing split majorities to coalesce on a single candidate in the runoff.
4. **Minimizing Wasted Votes** (-1) SMR produces somewhat fewer wasted votes than SMP.
5. **Majority Rule** (0) While better than SMP due to the fact that the winner in each individual district must earn a majority vote, gerrymandering can still allow a minority of voters city-wide to defeat the will of the majority.
6. **Representativeness** (-1) Same as SMP.
7. **Minority Inclusion** (-1) Minority candidates may occasionally win under SMR if there are favorable district boundaries (and if the minority is geographically concentrated). However, gerrymandering often undercuts this possibility.
8. **Resistance to Gerrymandering** (-2) Same as SMP.
9. **Opportunity to Serve** (-2) Same as SMP.
10. **Constituent Connection** (0) Same as SMP.
11. **Accountability** (-2) Same as SMP.
12. **Balancing Stability and Responsiveness** (-1) Same as SMP.
13. **Balancing Neighborhoods and the City** (-2) Same as SMP.
14. **Issues Focused Campaigns** (-2) Separate runoff elections often generate extreme negative campaigning.
15. **Manageable Campaign Costs** (-1) Because of the need to raise money for a second election quickly, campaign costs are particularly high under SMR
16. **Ease of Voter Use** (-2) SMR essentially doubles the effort required under SMP (when a runoff is needed). Many voters fail to vote in one of the two elections.

17. **Voter Participation** (-2) Because of the need for voters to turn out for a second election, SMR is even worse than SMP in terms of voter turnout for one or the other of the two elections required.
18. **Ease of Administration** (-2) SMR can double the cost and effort of administering elections compared to SMP.

3. Single-Member District - majority - instant runoff (SMI)

This is the same as SMR except that the runoff occurs at the same time as the original election. Rather than selecting a single candidate, voters rank candidates in order of preference. If no candidate is the first choice of at least 50% of the voters, a runoff count can be conducted using the rankings on each ballot so that a separate election is unnecessary. The candidates with the fewest votes are eliminated (either sequentially, or in a batch) and the votes that they gained are redistributed in accordance with the voters' lower-ranked choices until one candidate has won a majority of the vote. San Francisco, CA has recently adopted this method.

1   **Voter Choice** (+1) Same as SMR.
2   **Competitive Races** (-1) Same as SMR.
3   **Preventing "Spoiler" and "Sponge" Problems** (+2) Same as SMR.
4   **Minimizing Wasted Votes** (-1) Same as SMR..
5   **Majority Rule** (0) Same as SMR.
6   **Representativeness** (-1) Same as SMP and SMR.
7   **Minority Inclusion** (-1) Same as SMR.
8   **Resistance to Gerrymandering** (-2) Same as SMP and SMR.
9   **Opportunity to Serve** (-2) Same as SMP and SMR.
10 **Constituent Connection** (0) Same as SMP and SMR.
11 **Accountability** (-2) Same as SMP and SMR.
12 **Balancing Stability and Responsiveness** (-1) Same as SMP and SMR.
13 **Balancing Neighborhoods and the City** (-2) Same as SMP and SMR.
14 **Issues Focused Campaigns** (+1) Because candidates want both to distinguish themselves from multiple candidates, and to seek second preferences from supporters of other candidates, SMI tends to favor less negative campaigning and more issues-based campaigns.
15 **Manageable Campaign Costs** (+2) Same as SMP.
16 **Ease of Voter Use** (0) While less burdensome than SMR, SMI requires extra thought and attention due to the use of a ranked ballot.
17 **Voter Participation** (0) Since the spoiler problem is eliminated, and there is only a single election, SMI encourages higher voter turnout than SMP and SMR.
18 **Ease of Administration** (0) SMI is simpler than SMR (just one election), but more complicated than SMP due to the need to tally rank-order ballots.

4. City-wide At-Large - plurality   (CAP)

Under this system, all city voters vote for all of the seats up for election. The candidates with the highest vote totals win the seats, whether or not they have support from 50% of the voters. Cities using this method include Cincinnati, OH and Detroit, MI.

1.   **Voter Choice** (+1) With so many seats up for grabs, more voters are likely to find candidates they can enthusiastically support. However, the winner-take-all nature of CAP can often still discourage candidates from minority perspectives from even entering the race.
2.   **Competitive Races** (-1) While strategic use of "bullet voting" can create some unpredictability, the dominant group generally wins all, or nearly all seats.
3.   **Preventing "Spoiler" and "Sponge" Problems** (-2) In addition to the usual spoiler dynamic of SMP, CAP also can cause undemocratic outcomes if *fewer* than the optimal number of candidates appealing to a given constituency run. When there are too few candidates in a slate, supportive voters may give their remaining votes to the least objectionable candidates in the opposing slate, resulting in the edging out of a preferred candidate in the favored slate. The mathematics of multi-seat plurality voting encourages the recruitment of so-called "sponge" candidates to fill out a slate.
4.   **Minimizing Wasted Votes** (-2) Like SMP, CAP generally produces a high ratio of wasted votes. CAP adds an additional wrinkle, in that many voters "bullet vote," – that is they don't use all of the votes to which they are entitled – to strategically help favored candidates. Such withheld votes are essentially the same as wasted votes since they are thrown away and do not go to winning candidates.
5.   **Majority Rule** (0) Although minority candidates may win some seats (or in rare cases even a majority of seats!) if too many candidates supported by the dominant group split the vote (the spoiler issue), as long as the number of the dominant constituency nominees is suitable, the dominant group can generally win a sweep of all seats.
6.   **Representativeness** (-1) CAP is similar to SMP, but potentially even less representative as 100% sweeps by the dominant party or group are more likely.
7.   **Minority Inclusion** (-2) Minority candidates are unlikely to win seats under CAP. For this reason, some cities using this method have been subject to Voting Rights Act lawsuits. A city may be forced to abandon this method if a class of voters protected under the Voting Rights Act can show a dilution of their voting strength.
8.   **Resistance to Gerrymandering** (+2) CAP is not subject to gerrymandering.

9. **Opportunity to Serve** (-1) Because CAP makes it difficult for any candidate from a minority constituency to win a seat, entire segments of society are essentially precluded from serving on council. However, candidates of the dominant group can win regardless of which neighborhood they reside in.

10. **Constituent Connection** (-2) CAP tends to have among the weakest connections between councilors and their constituents, both because of sheer numbers and the fact that substantial minorities (or even majorities) may feel that none of the councilors really represent them.

11. **Accountability** (0) Councilors who alienate too many of their previously supportive constituents may be subject to replacement. However, city-wide incumbency and name recognition make defeat unlikely. Further alienating minority constituents can be risk-free.

12. **Balancing Stability and Responsiveness** (-2) Similar to SMP, except there is somewhat greater risk of a complete removal of incumbents in a hyper-responsive reaction to a modest swing of voter sentiment. Though the likelihood is small, it means that staggered terms seem warranted in the case of CAP.

13. **Balancing Neighborhoods and the City** (-2) In communities using CAP, most councilors often come from a few neighborhoods, with other areas having little or no representation.

14. **Issues Focused Campaigns** (0) Thematic and slate campaigns are common, and can allow a somewhat greater focus on policy than on personal attacks. Crowded fields of candidates, however, may put an undue emphasis on mere "name recognition" campaigns.

15. **Manageable Campaign Costs** (-1) The overall cost of campaigning is relatively high due to the large number of voters needing to be mobilized to achieve a winning threshold, and the large field of candidates in which it is necessary to stand out. However, party-based team or slate campaigning can moderate this in many cases.

16. **Ease of Voter Use** (+1) CAP is fairly simple except that there is a risk of accidental over-voting (unless the voting machine prevents such errors).

17. **Voter Participation** (0) For the reasons discussed above, CAP generally has modest voter turnout.

18. **Ease of Administration** (+2) CAP is possibly the simplest method to administer, with a single ballot design for the entire city.

5. City-wide Designated Seats - plurality (CDP)

This is identical to CAP except for the fact that candidates declare for designated seats. The candidate for each seat with the highest vote count wins, even if that is less than 50% of the vote. The designated seats may simply be numbered seats, or may have geographic designations with the candidates being required to live in a particular area of the city. This differs from a district system in that all voters in the city vote for all of the seats, rather than just those voters residing in a certain district. Cities that use CDP include Seattle, WA, Austin, TX, and Tucson, AZ.

1. **Voter Choice** (+1) Same as CAP.
2. **Competitive Races** (-1) Same as CAP.
3. **Preventing "Spoiler" and "Sponge" Problems** (-2) Same as SMP.
4. **Minimizing Wasted Votes (**-2) Same as SMP.
5. **Majority Rule (**-2) Same as SMP.
6. **Representativeness** (-1) Same as CAP.
7. **Minority Inclusion** (-2) Same as CAP.
8. **Resistance to Gerrymandering** (+2) Same as CAP.
9. **Opportunity to Serve** (-1) Same as CAP.
10. **Constituent Connection** (-2) Same as CAP.
11. **Accountability** (+1) Because gerrymandering is not possible, and challengers can target individual incumbents, it is somewhat easier to hold councilors accountable under CDP than under SMP or CAP.
12. **Balancing Stability and Responsiveness** (-2) Same as CAP.
13. **Balancing Neighborhoods and the City** (-2) Same as CAP. Cities that require candidates to live in specific neighborhoods create only an illusion of neighborhood sensitivity. The fact that these councilors are elected by all city voters, and can win even if every resident in "their" district opposes them, means they aren't necessarily representative of those neighborhoods.
14. **Issues Focused Campaigns** (-1) Same as SMP.
15. **Manageable Campaign Costs** (-1) Same as CAP.
16. **Ease of Voter Use** (+1) Similar to SMP, except the large number of races each voter participates in requires them to gather more information. Some voters are also frustrated when they are forced to choose between two candidates that they like in one race, while in another they disapprove of all of the candidates.
17. **Voter Participation** (0) Same as CAP.
18. **Ease of Administration** (+2) Same as CAP.

CITY COUNCIL ELECTION METHOD PERFORMANCE SCORES		1 SMP	2 SMR	3 SMI	4 CAP	5 CDP	6 CAR	7 CDR	8 MDP	9 MXP	10 CUA	11 CUD	12 LAL	13 LMD	14 CHA	15 CHD	16 OPD	17 PLC	18 PLO	19 MMP
1	Voter Choice	-2	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+2	+2	+2	+1	+2	+1
2	Competitive Races	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	+1	+1	-1	-1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+2	+2	+2	+2
3	No "Spoiler" or "Sponge" Problem	-2	+2	+2	-2	-2	+2	+2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	+2	+2	+1	+2	+2	0
4	Minimizing Wasted Votes	-2	-1	-1	-2	-2	-1	-1	-2	-2	0	0	0	0	+2	+1	+1	+2	+2	+2
5	Majority Rule	-2	0	0	0	-2	+2	+2	0	-1	0	0	0	0	+2	+2	-1	+2	+2	+2
6	Representativeness	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-2	-2	-1	-1	+1	+1	0	0	+2	+1	+1	+2	+2	+2
7	Minority Inclusion	0	-1	-1	-2	-2	-2	-2	-1	-1	+1	+1	0	0	+2	+1	+2	+1	+1	+1
8	Resistance to Gerrymandering	-2	-2	-2	+2	+2	+2	+2	-2	-1	+2	0	+2	0	+2	+1	0	+2	+2	+1
9	Opportunity to Serve	-2	-2	-2	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	+1	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	0	0	+1
10	Constituent Connection	0	0	0	-2	-2	-2	-2	0	-1	+1	+2	0	+2	+1	+2	+2	-2	-1	+2
11	Accountability	-2	-2	-2	0	+1	0	+1	0	-1	+1	+1	+1	+1	0	+1	+1	-1	+1	+1
12	Stability vs. Responsiveness	-1	-1	-1	-2	-2	-2	-2	-1	-2	-1	-1	-1	-1	+2	+2	+1	+2	+2	+2
13	Neighborhood vs. City Balance	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-1	+1	-1	+1	-2	+1	-1	+2	+2	-1	-1	+2
14	Issues Focused Campaigns	-1	-2	+1	0	-1	0	-2	+1	0	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+2	+1	+1
15	Manageable Campaign Costs	+2	-1	+2	-1	-1	-2	-2	+1	0	-1	+1	-1	+1	0	+2	0	+2	0	0
16	Ease of Voter Use	+1	-2	0	+1	+1	-2	-2	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	-1	0	+2	+2	+2	+2
17	Voter Participation	-1	-2	0	0	0	-2	-2	0	0	+1	+1	+1	+1	+2	+2	+2	+1	+1	+1
18	Ease of Administration	+2	-2	0	+2	+2	-2	-2	+1	+1	0	0	+2	+2	-1	-1	+1	+2	+1	+1

6. City-wide At-Large - majority by separate runoff (CAR)

CAR is the same as CAP except that there is a winning threshold of 50%. If 7 seats are up for election, and 2 seats remain unfilled in the first election because only 5 candidates surpassed the majority threshold, then typically a runoff election is held in which the top 4 un-elected candidates vie for the remaining 2 seats. Scottsdale, AZ uses a form of CAR.

1. **Voter Choice** (+1) Same as SMR.
2. **Competitive Races** (+1) The elimination of the spoiler disincentive and gerrymandered safe seats results in more competition. This competition, however may be limited to contests within the dominant group.
3. **Preventing "Spoiler" and "Sponge" Problems** (+2) Same as SMR.
4. **Minimizing Wasted Votes** (-1) Same as SMR
5. **Majority Rule** (+2) The majority is assured of controlling the council.
6. **Representativeness** (-2) CAR creates a homogenous council with election of any seats by candidates from a second party or group unlikely.
7. **Minority Inclusion** (-2) The CAR majority requirement makes it very hard for any candidates outside the dominant group to win any seats. Only widespread bullet voting may allow minority inclusion.
8. **Resistance to Gerrymandering** (+2) Same as CAP.
9. **Opportunity to Serve** (-1) Same as CAP.
10. **Constituent Connection** (-2) Same as CAP.
11. **Accountability** (0) Same as CAP.
12. **Balancing Stability and Responsiveness** (-2) Same as CAP.
13. **Balancing Neighborhoods and the City** (-2) Same as CAP.
14. **Issues Focused Campaigns** (0) Same as CAP.
15. **Manageable Campaign Costs** (-2) CAR can result in even more expensive campaigns than CAP, having all of the challenges of CAP plus the added cost of quickly raising funds for a separate runoff election.
16. **Ease of Voter Use** (-2) The effort required of the voter is doubled in each case where a runoff is called.
17. **Voter Participation** (-2) Same as SMR.
18. **Ease of Administration** (-2) Whenever an election goes to a runoff, the work and cost involved in administering the election essentially doubles.

7. City-wide Designated Seats majority by separate runoff (CDR)

CDR is the same as CDP except that each seat requires a 50% winning threshold, with a runoff between the top two candidates declared for each seat remaining unfilled from the first round election. This is essentially the same as the variant that treats the first round of voting as a "primary" to reduce the field to just two finalists for the subsequent round of voting.

1. **Voter Choice** (+1) Same as SMR and CAR.

2. **Competitive Races** (+1) Same as CAR.
3. **Preventing "Spoiler" and "Sponge" Problems** (+2) Same as SMR.
4. **Minimizing Wasted Votes** (-1) Same as SMR.
5. **Majority Rule** (+2) Same as CAR.
6. **Representativeness** (-2) Same as CAR.
7. **Minority Inclusion** (-2) Same as CAP.
8. **Resistance to Gerrymandering** (+2) Same as CAP.
9. **Opportunity to Serve** (-1) Same as CAP.
10. **Constituent Connection** (-2) Same as CAP.
11. **Accountability** (+1) Same as CDP.
12. **Balancing Stability and Responsiveness** (-2) Same as CAP.
13. **Balancing Neighborhoods and the City** (-2) Same as CDP.
14. **Issues Focused Campaigns** (-2) Same as SMR.
15. **Manageable Campaign Costs** (-2) Same as CAR.
16. **Ease of Voter Use** (-2) Same as CAR.
17. **Voter Participation** (-2) Same as SMR and CAR.
18. **Ease of Administration** (-2) Same as CAR.

8. Multi-Member Districts - plurality (MDP)

MDP is similar to SMP except that more than one seat per district is filled at a time. Only voters residing within a district vote can vote for candidates running from that district, and the candidates with the most votes are elected to fill the number of seats that are open. In some varieties of MDP, different seats may have different terms, with the top vote-getters getting the longer terms. (MDP should not be confused with councils that are elected from multi-seat districts with staggered terms, where only one seat per district is filled in a given election. Such a system functions like SMP.)

1 **Voter Choice** (+1) Same as CAP.
2 **Competitive Races** (-1) Same as CAP.
3 **Preventing "Spoiler" and "Sponge" Problems** (-2) Same as CAP.
4 **Minimizing Wasted Votes** (-2) Same as CAP.
5 **Majority Rule** (0) MDP is somewhere between SMP and CAP. With larger districts, manipulation through gerrymandering is more difficult but still possible. Spoilers are also still a danger.
6 **Representativeness** (-1) Same as SMP.
7 **Minority Inclusion** (-1) Minority candidates can have a chance to win seats under MDP if districts are drawn favorably. However, since the majority ultimately draws the district boundaries this is not assured.
8 **Resistance to Gerrymandering** (-2) MDP is still subject to gerrymandering.
9 **Opportunity to Serve** (-1) Because MDP makes it difficult for any candidate from a minority constituency within a district to win a seat,

entire segments of society are essentially precluded from serving on council.

10 **Constituent Connection** (0) Same as SMP
11 **Accountability** (0) Councilors who alienate their core constituents may be subject to replacement. However, further alienating minority constituents is essentially risk free.
12 **Balancing Stability and Responsiveness** (-1) Similar to SMP.
13 **Balancing Neighborhoods and the City** (-1) With larger geographic districts than SMP, MDP is somewhat less parochial, though still often lacking a true citywide perspective.
14 **Issues Focused Campaigns** (+1) Thematic and slate campaigns are common, allowing a somewhat greater focus on policy than on personal attacks.
15 **Manageable Campaign Costs** (+1) The overall cost of campaigning is moderate, especially when party-based or slate campaigns work in tandem with one another.
16 **Ease of Voter Use** (+1) Same as CAP
17 **Voter Participation** (0) Same as CAP.
18 **Ease of Administration** (+1) MDP is a fairly simple method to administer.

9. Mixed - At-Large and Districts - plurality (MXP)

MXP has some at-large council seats voted for on a citywide basis, and other council seats filled by voters in single-member districts. In this account, only the plurality case is considered (top vote-getters are elected, regardless of whether the 50% threshold is passed). However, a combination of district and city-wide seats can be used with a variety of election methods, such as majority runoff, limited, cumulative, choice, etc. An evaluation of those other election methods can be found under the pure example of each below. Boston is an example of a city using MXP.

1. **Voter Choice** (+1) Same as CAP
2. **Competitive Races** (-1) Same as CAP
3. **Preventing "Spoiler" and "Sponge" Problems** (-2) Same as CAP.
4. **Minimizing Wasted Votes** (-2) Same as CAP
5. **Majority Rule** (-1) Although the dominant group will generally win a majority or all seats on the council, gerrymandering within districts along with the spoiler dynamic sometimes allows majority will to be defeated.
6. **Representativeness** (-1) Same as SMP.
7. **Minority Inclusion** (-1) Inclusion generally depends on "majority-minority" district seats.
8. **Resistance to Gerrymandering** (-1) While somewhat better than SMP since the at-large seats are not subject to gerrymandering, district seats may still be gerrymandered and be decisive in determining control of the council.

9. **Opportunity to Serve** (+1) A resident is not automatically precluded from winning a seat due to living in the "wrong" neighborhood, because both the district and the at-large routes to election are available. However, candidates from minority groups often do not have an opportunity to serve.
10. **Constituent Connection** (-1) MXP shares the characteristics of SMP and CAP, and is thus ranked between the two.
11. **Accountability** (-1) MXP shares the characteristics of SMP and CAP, and is thus ranked between the two.
12. **Balancing Stability and Responsiveness** (-2) Same as CAP.
13. **Balancing Neighborhoods and the City** (+1) MXP is supposed to provide a balance. However, the party with control of the council has no incentive to pay attention to neighborhoods in which their candidates can't win.
14. **Issues Focused Campaigns** (0) Same as CAP.
15. **Manageable Campaign Costs** (0) The cost of campaigning depends on whether a citywide or district seat is sought. High spending for the citywide seats may also ratchet up the spending for district races to achieve visibility.
16. **Ease of Voter Use** (+1) Same as CAP.
17. **Voter Participation** (0) Same as CAP
18. **Ease of Administration** (+1) MXP involves running two kinds of elections at once, but since both are simple, the score is still positive.

10. Cumulative - At-Large (CUA)

In a multi-seat election each voter has as many votes as there are seats to be filled. With CUA, however, each voter is allowed to distribute his or her votes as desired – either one per candidate, or more than one vote for fewer candidates, or even all votes for just one candidate. For example, if three seats are open, a voter might give one vote to each of three candidates, or two votes to one and one vote to another, or all three votes to just one candidate. Cumulative voting complies with the "one-person, one-vote" requirement as all voters have equal voting strength. Cumulative voting has been used to settle several Voting Rights Act lawsuits because it allows minority voters to pool their votes, so avoiding a total shutout from the representative body. Over 80 jurisdictions in the U.S. use cumulative voting. The system is also used by many stock corporations to assure minority shareholders have an opportunity for representation. One variant of cumulative voting deserving special consideration is the form used in Peoria, Illinois. Rather than placing a certain number of marks next to candidates' names to indicate the number of votes given, the voters simply place a single mark next to their chosen number of candidates. In a three-seat election, if a voter marks three candidates, they each

get one vote. If the voter marks one candidate, that candidate automatically gets all three votes. If the voter marks two candidates, each gets one and a half votes. This variant of cumulative voting has much to recommend it since the risk of spoiling one's ballot by over-voting is largely eliminated. It is the Peoria variant of cumulative voting that is scored here.

1. **Voter Choice** (+1) Voters choose between multiple candidates, and also get to decide how to apportion their votes. However, strategic use of CUA encourages limiting nominations to avoid spreading a group's votes to wide and thin. Depending on the nomination procedure, there is even some risk of reaching a equilibrium where each group nominates exactly the number of seats they are likely to win, thus restricting voter choice.
2. **Voter Competitive Races** (+1) CUA ensures almost all races are competitive, though the possibility of equilibrium mentioned in criterion 2 may reduce competition.
3. **Preventing "Spoiler" and "Sponge" Problems** (-2) If a constituency spreads their votes between too many candidates, they may fail to elect candidates who would have won if fewer similar candidates had run.
4. **Minimizing Wasted Votes** (0) Minority voters are *not* consigned to casting wasted votes, unless too many of their candidates run and split the vote. However, overly popular candidates may receive far *more* votes than needed to win. Such votes are also wasted, since had those voters known their favorite candidate would win, they could have given their votes to alternate choice candidates, so electing more councilors they approve of.
5. **Majority Rule** (0) The majority group is likely to elect a majority of the council. However, if too many candidates of the dominant group face off, or votes are overly cumulated onto too few star candidates, it is possible for a minority to elect a majority of the council.
6. **Representativeness** (+1) CUA is superior to all of the preceding methods in allowing a fully representative council. However, representativeness depends on parties or slate groups coordinating nominations or voting cumulation.
7. **Minority Inclusion** (+1) CUA is superior to all of the preceding methods in allowing inclusion of minority candidates on the council. The success of minority candidates, however, depends on coordinating nominations or voting cumulation.
8. **Resistance to Gerrymandering** (+2) Same as CAP.
9. **Opportunity to Serve** (+2) High caliber candidates from any part of the city, and from both dominant and minority groups are able to win seats.
10. **Constituent Connection** (+1) Many voters will have a favorite candidate who they successfully helped elect. The connection is less likely to be based on geography than on policy or group commonality. The citywide magnitude, however, limits how much attention each constituent may receive.
11. **Accountability** (+1) An alienated group of constituents can defeat an incumbent by not concentrating their votes on that candidate next time.

However, there is a risk that this may split the vote and inadvertently help elect a candidate the alienated voters consider to be even less desirable.
12. **Balancing Stability and Responsiveness** (-1) CUA tends to create a stable government-returning incumbent, with or without the equilibrium described in criterion 2 and 3. However, dissatisfaction among a group of voters can result in additional nominations, bringing the spoiler dynamic into play, and so swinging the council away from a responsive direction.
13. **Balancing Neighborhoods and the City** (-1) CUA does not guarantee neighborhoods representation, unless like-minded voters who cumulate votes happen to be geographically concentrated.
14. **Issues Focused Campaigns** (+1) CUA tends to promote group-endorsed slates, which frequently put issues at the center of campaigns. With greater voter choice, moreover, personal attack campaigns are of less benefit to candidates. However, personal loyalty and individual candidate campaign strategy for cumulating votes can result in internal party divisiveness, rather than team efforts around a common platform.
15. **Manageable Campaign Costs** (-1) Same as CAP.
16. **Ease of Voter Use** (+1) CUA with Peoria-style voting ranks the same as CAP. The open-ended variant of cumulative voting has a higher risk of over-vote spoiled ballots and would rank 0 or -1. To be used effectively, CUA requires organized voters who nominate appropriate numbers of candidates.
17. **Voter Participation** (+1) Since both dominant and minority groups have the possibility of electing representatives, participation is enhanced.
18. **Ease of Administration** (0) The vote tabulating procedure is more involved than many other methods. Continuing voter education on how to use cumulative voting is necessary.

11. Cumulative - Multi-Member Districts (CUD)

This is the same as CUA, except that there are multiple districts with multiple seats. Voters within each district use cumulative voting to fill the seats from their district.

1. **Voter Choice** (+1) Same as CUA.
2. **Competitive Races** (+1) Same as CUA.
3. **Preventing "Spoiler" and "Sponge" Problems** (-2) Same as CUA
4. **Minimizing Wasted Votes** (0) Same as CUA.
5. **Majority Rule** (0) Same as CUA.
6. **Representativeness** (+1) Same as CUA.
7. **Minority Inclusion** (+1) Same as CUA.
8. **Resistance to Gerrymandering** (0) While gerrymandering is not impossible, its effectiveness for manipulating results is limited due to the semi-proportional nature of the election method.

9. **Opportunity to Serve** (+2) Same as CUA.
10. **Constituent Connection** (+2) CUD has both the connection described in CUA as well as a neighborhood scale benefit.
11. **Accountability** (+1) Same as CUA.
12. **Balancing Stability and Responsiveness** (-1) Same as CUA.
13. **Balancing Neighborhoods and the City** (+1) More than one party will have an interest in serving every neighborhood.
14. **Issues Focused Campaigns** (+1) Same as CUA.
15. **Manageable Campaign Costs** (+1) Same as MDP.
16. **Ease of Voter Use** (+1) Same as CUA.
17. **Voter Participation** (+1) Same as CUA.
18. **Ease of Administration** (0) Same as CUA.

12. Limited - at large (LAL)

In a multi-seat election each voter is granted a number of votes smaller than the number of seats to be filled. For example, if there are seven seats to be elected, each voter might be allowed only five votes, or perhaps just one vote. LAL is a system intended to discourage a 100% homogeneous council and allow at least some seats to be filled by minority parties and groups. Strategic coordination of the number of nominations is usually necessary for any minority success with LAL however, since the spoiler problem still exists. Philadelphia is an example of a city using LAL within a mixed at-large and district system.

1. **Voter Choice** (+1) Same as CUA.
2. **Competitive Races** (+1) Same as CUA.
3. **Preventing "Spoiler" and "Sponge" Problems** (-2) Same as CAP.
4. **Minimizing Wasted Votes** (0) Similar to CUA.
5. **Majority Rule** (0) Same as CUA.
6. **Representativeness** (0) This score depends on the ratio of seats to permitted votes per voter. For example with five seats to fill, if each voter gets three votes, the second party has a good chance of winning a seat or two, and a score of 0 is achieved. With a single vote per voter, a party with support from about one fifth of the electorate can expect to win one of the five seats, and the score would rise to +1.
7. **Minority Inclusion** (0) Typically, only very large minorities (such as the number two political party) have access to inclusion. Inclusion of minority councilors depends largely on the number of votes granted to each voter compared to the number of seats. The smaller the number of votes granted to each voter, the greater the chance that minority candidates may win some seats.
8. **Resistance to Gerrymandering** (+2) Same as CUA.
9. **Opportunity to Serve** (+2) Same as CUA.
10. **Constituent Connection** (0) Since most voters are able to elect at least one councilor with whom they agree, LAL scores higher than CAP.

11. **Accountability** (+1) Same as CUA.
12. **Balancing Stability and Responsiveness** (-1) Same as CUA.
13. **Balancing Neighborhoods and the City** (-2) Similar to CAP.
14. **Issues Focused Campaigns** (+1) Similar to CUA.
15. **Manageable Campaign Costs** (-1) Same as CUA and CAP.
16. **Ease of Voter Use** (+1) Same as CAP.
17. **Voter Participation** (+1) Same as CUA.
18. **Ease of Administration** (+2) Same as CAP.

13. Limited - Multi-Member Districts (LMD)

This is the same as LAL except that there are multiple districts with multiple seats, and voters from within the district use limited voting to fill the seats from their district.

1. **Voter Choice** (+1) Same as CUA.
2. **Competitive Races** (+1) Same as CUA.
3. **Preventing "Spoiler" and "Sponge" Problems** (-2) Same as CUA
4. **Minimizing Wasted Votes** (0) Similar to CUA.
5. **Majority Rule** (0) Same as CUA.
6. **Representativeness** (0) Same as CUA.
7. **Minority Inclusion** (0) Same as LAL.
8. **Resistance to Gerrymandering** (0) Same as CUD.
9. **Opportunity to Serve** (+2) Same as CUA.
10. **Constituent Connection** (+2) Same as CUD.
11. **Accountability** (+1) Same as CUA.
12. **Balancing Stability and Responsiveness** (-1) Same as CUA.
13. **Balancing Neighborhoods and the City** (+1) Same as CUD.
14. **Issues Focused Campaigns** (+1) Same as CUD.
15. **Manageable Campaign Costs** (+1) Same as CUD.
16. **Ease of Voter Use** (+1) Same as CAP.
17. **Voter Participation** (+1) Same as CUA.
18. **Ease of Administration** (+2) Same as SMP.

14. Choice - at-large (CHA)

Choice voting (also called "single transferable vote" or STV) is a form of limited voting in which voters maximize their vote's effectiveness through ranking choices. In consequence, like-minded groups of voters are assured of representation in rough proportion to their share of the electorate. The vote tallying procedure is complicated to describe, but the voters' task is reasonably simple. Voters rank candidates in order of preference, putting a "1" by their

first choice, a "2" by their second choice and so on. Voters can rank as few or as many candidates as they wish. A voter's lower choice will never count against the chances of a higher choice. To determine winners, the number of votes necessary for a candidate to earn office is calculated as 1/(number of seats +1) +1. In a race to elect three seats, for instance, the winning threshold would be one vote more than 25% of the vote, since no more than three candidates could ever reach this threshold. After counting first choices, candidates who have attained the winning threshold are elected. To minimize the number of wasted votes, "surplus" ballots beyond the threshold are transferred to remaining candidates according to voters' next-choice preferences. After transferring surplus ballots, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated. All of his or her ballots are distributed among remaining candidates according to voters' next-choice preferences. This process continues until all seats are filled. A simple computer program can handle the count, although in many places it is done by hand. Choice voting has been used in over 20 U.S. cities at one time or another. Cambridge (MA) has used it since 1941.

1. **Voter Choice** (+2) The absence of any spoiler dynamic, and the opportunity for minority inclusion removes most impediments to potential candidates.
2. **Competitive Races** (+1) Ballots with large numbers of candidates can hinder challengers, as name recognition can be very important. However, there is normally intense competition for the final seats.
3. **Preventing "Spoiler" and "Sponge" Problems** (+2) There is no spoiler issue as the votes of like-minded voters that are initially split among similar candidates will eventually re-coalesce through the vote tabulation process.
4. **Minimizing Wasted Votes** (+2) There are very few wasted votes since both the surplus votes of winners and otherwise wasted votes of certain losers get transferred to possible winners. The majority of voters see a candidate to whom they gave support elected.
5. **Majority Rule** (+2) A majority will elect a majority of council seats.
6. **Representativeness** (+2) Each significant party or slate can expect to elect a share of seats roughly proportionate to its level of support among the voters. If a party has support from 60% of the voters, that party can expect to win about 60% of the seats, and a party with 20% support can expect to win about 20% of the seats. The more seats up for election the closer the proportionality.
7. **Minority Inclusion** (+2) Candidates from minority groups can win a share of council seats in proportion to their support within the population, regardless of how many similar candidates split the vote.
8. **Resistance to Gerrymandering** (+2) Same as CAP.
9. **Opportunity to Serve** (+2) Same as CUA.
10. **Constituent Connection** (+1) Same as CUA.

11. **Accountability** (0) It is hard for a challenger to target a particular councilor for removal. Each councilor is elected by a relatively small segment of the community. Councilors have an interest in being faithful to that base, but can't be sure exactly who voted for them. Since the election is citywide, and incumbency brings name recognition, it is harder for that original core to hold the successful candidate accountable.
12. **Balancing Stability and Responsiveness** (+2) CHA behaves like a dimmer switch, with gradual changes in council make-up reflective of changes in the electorate.
13. **Balancing Neighborhoods and the City** (-1) While it is possible for a candidate to win a seat by campaigning only in a selected neighborhood, most successful candidates will gain support from throughout the city. Some neighborhoods may feel slighted.
14. **Issues Focused Campaigns** (+1) Personal attacks can easily backfire (losing alternate preferences from other candidates' supporters), so negative campaigning is avoided. Endorsement slates bring an issues focus to campaigns. However, the need for first preference votes can encourage campaigns around personal loyalty, rather than common platform. Intra-party rivalry can develop.
15. **Manageable Campaign Costs** (0) Although the campaign is citywide, the total number of votes needed to win is a tiny fraction of a typical citywide election. A greater reliance is placed on mobilizing a candidate's core support than on appealing to the non-political swing voters, who drive up the cost of campaigns in plurality and majority election methods.
16. **Ease of Voter Use** (-1) While experience shows that ranking candidates is a simple task for voters to learn, the sheer number of candidates to evaluate (even though ranking additional candidates can be optional) in a city-wide CHA election poses a challenge to some.
17. **Voter Participation** (+2) The high scores on the criteria above combine to promote higher voter participation with CHA.
18. **Ease of Administration** (-1) Ongoing voter education is required, as new voters will typically be unfamiliar with rank-order ballots. If a hand-count is used, the labor for tabulating results can be several times that of a plurality election. However, optical scanner or touch screen voting machines with a simple computer program can alleviate that labor cost.

15. Choice - Multi-Member Districts (CHD)

This is the same as CHA except the city is divided into multi-member districts of between three and ten seats per district. The population per district can vary as long as the number of seats corresponds to the population.

1. **Voter Choice** (+2) Same as CHA.
2. **Competitive Races** (+1) Same as CHA.

3. **Preventing "Spoiler" and "Sponge" Problems** (+2) Same as CHA.
4. **Minimizing Wasted Votes** (+1) Similar to CHA, but a smaller number of seats means that not as many voters will elect their choice.
5. **Majority Rule** (+2) Same as CHA.
6. **Representativeness** (+1) similar to CHA, except the smaller number of seats per election means rougher proportionality and that smaller parties or slates will have less chance of victories.
7. **Minority Inclusion** (+1) While minority candidates are assured a chance for election, the smallest minority groups able to win seats under CHA will lose out under CHD.
8. **Resistance to Gerrymandering** (+1) Gerrymandering is almost pointless since both majority and minority parties are virtually certain to win seats in every district regardless of where boundaries are drawn.
9. **Opportunity to Serve** (+2) Same as CUA.
10. **Constituent Connection** (+2) Same as CUD.
11. **Accountability** (+1) Same as CUD.
12. **Balancing Stability and Responsiveness** (+2) Same as CHA.
13. **Balancing Neighborhoods and the City** (+2) All parties have an interest in voters throughout the city and from all neighborhoods, and each district is assured a voice on the council.
14. **Issues Focused Campaigns** (+1) Same as CHA
15. **Manageable Campaign Costs** (+2) The total number of votes needed to win a seat is very modest. Candidates can target supportive constituents within the neighborhood rather than expensive to reach non-political swing voters.
16. **Ease of Voter Use** (0) the number of candidates to evaluate and rank is smaller than under CHA.
17. **Voter Participation** (+2) Same as CHA.
18. **Ease of Administration** (-1) Same as CHA.

16. Optional Party - Multi-Member Districts (OPD)

OPD is a form of limited voting in which each voter has a single vote that he or she can cast for a single candidate in a multi-seat election, or for a party slate of candidates. As with CHA, a winning threshold is calculated based on the number of seats and votes cast. Candidates who exceed the winning threshold are elected. There is no ranking of candidates, so candidate-votes are not transferred. However, votes cast for a party slate are automatically distributed to whichever candidate of that party is closest to reaching the winning threshold based on the candidate-votes received. Voters who feel they know enough about the individual candidates to support a favorite can vote for that candidate, while voters who don't feel they have that level of information, or who wish to support whichever candidate of a particular party can use their help the most, have the option of picking a party instead of a candidate.

Independent candidates can be elected on the strength of individual candidate votes or as part of an ad hoc independent slate.

1. **Voter Choice** (+2) Similar to CHA with the added option of choosing a party.
2. **Competitive Races** (+2) The competition for the final seats is always intense.0
3. **Preventing "Spoiler" and "Sponge" Problems** (+1) Similar to CHD, except dependent on wide use of party vote option.
4. **Minimizing Wasted Votes** (+1) While similar to CUD, the party vote option allows more votes that would otherwise be wasted on losers or as surplus for winners, to instead go to other possible winners. If enough voters cast party votes the number of wasted votes can be reduced to CHD levels.
5. **Majority Rule** (-1) Same as CUD.
6. **Representativeness** (+1) OPD is superior to LMD because each voter has a single vote and wasted votes are reduced by use of the optional party vote.
7. **Minority Inclusion** (+2) Minorities identified with a particular party (such as Republicans in a strongly Democratic city) can win seats. Other minorities can win seats even as independents due to the limited vote.
8. **Resistance to Gerrymandering** (0) Same as CUD.
9. **Opportunity to Serve** (+2) Same as CUD
10. **Constituent Connection** (+2) Same as CUD.
11. **Accountability** (+1) If a councilor's core supporters feel alienated, they may unseat that councilor by voting for an alternate choice. This can have the magnified effect of also transferring those ballots cast for the party slate rather than any individual candidate.
12. **Balancing Stability and Responsiveness** (+1) Similar to CHD, OPD is both stable and responsive, except the slightly greater possibility for wasted votes can result in unexpected shifts from election to election.
13. **Balancing Neighborhoods and the City** (+2) Same as CHD.
14. **Issues Focused Campaigns** (+1) Parties' strategic interest in promoting party slate votes tends to generate a focus on issues and party platform. However, candidates themselves have a strong interest in stressing their individual character, rather than common platform.
15. **Manageable Campaign Costs** (0) OPD encourages party-organized team-effort slate campaigns, but individual candidates still seek to win hard-to-reach swing voters, which is more expensive.
16. **Ease of Voter Use** (+2) Voters can select either a favorite candidate or party, and so can comfortably vote based on the level of information they feel they have about the candidates.
17. **Voter Participation** (+2) Similar to CHA. Even voters who don't feel they know enough about the individual candidates can feel good about participating by making a party choice.

18. **Ease of Administration** (+1) Administration is simple, except it requires a subsequent mathematical operation to apportion the party slate votes to determine which candidates will be successful.

17. Party List - Closed (PLC)

Each party (or ad hoc slate) nominates a list of candidates, who are placed in order of priority (for example by a caucus, convention or primary). Voters select a party or slate, rather than individual candidates. The council seats are filled from the lists in proportion to the share of votes each party or slate receives. This is among the most common election methods in Europe and South America.

1. **Voter Choice** (+1) Voters choose a party rather than a candidate. At least two choices are available (unlike SMP, for example), but more voter choice depends on having more parties to choose among.
2. **Competitive Races** (+2) The fully proportional nature of PLO assures that every election will be competitive as to the number of seats held by each party, though not necessarily as to which party will have control of the council.
3. **Preventing "Spoiler" and "Sponge" Problems** (+2) PLC has no spoiler dynamic.
4. **Minimizing Wasted Votes** (+2) The fully proportional nature of PLC assures that nearly every vote will contribute to the election of a desired councilor.
5. **Majority Rule** (+2) The majority of voters are assured of electing a majority of council seats. If no party has majority support among the electorate, majority coalitions will form for council votes.
6. **Representativeness** (+2) Each significant party or slate can elect a proportionate share of seats.
7. **Minority Inclusion** (+1) While independent minority candidacies are possible, minorities not incorporated into party slates do not have as good a chance of winning seats. However, parties have an interest in incorporating minorities.
8. **Resistance to Gerrymandering** (+2) Same as CHA.
9. **Opportunity to Serve** (0) Independent candidates are at a disadvantage.
10. **Constituent Connection** (-2) Voters cannot select individual candidates, and the list order for each party slate is established prior to the election. In lieu of a councilor to constituent connection, PLC relies on a party to constituent connection.
11. **Accountability** (-1) Individual councilors are not held accountable so much as the party slate as a whole is. PLC promotes a party system accountable to its platform, rather than individual constituencies.
12. **Balancing Stability and Responsiveness** (+2) Same as CHA.

13. **Balancing Neighborhoods and the City** (-1) Same as CHA.
14. **Issues Focused Campaigns** (+2) PLC campaigns are about issues, rather than personalities.
15. **Manageable Campaign Costs** (+2) Parties win most of their seats based on their core voters, who do not require much spending to turn-out. The expensive-to-reach swing voters only determine which party will get the marginal seats. Thus, effective campaigns can be mounted at low expense.
16. **Ease of Voter Use** (+2) The simplest ballot possible, since it doesn't even need candidate names.
17. **Voter Participation** (+1) While nations using list election methods have much higher voter participation than those using winner-take-all systems, this is closely related to having numerous parties to choose from. In a country such as the U.S., with an extremely narrow range of parties and many voters alienated from the parties, such high participation cannot be assumed. However, new political parties existing only in that particular city might be expected to form.
18. **Ease of Administration** (+2) The simplest election method to administer.

18. Party List - Open (PLO)

Each party (or independent slate) nominates a list of candidates. Each voter selects one favorite candidate from their preferred party or slate. Each voter's vote counts effectively for both the individual candidate and the party or slate that candidate belongs to. The candidates from each party or slate are placed in an ordered list for each party or slate according to how many votes each candidate received. The council seats are filled from the lists in proportion to the overall share of votes all candidates from a party or slate received. Thus if candidates of party A received 60% of all votes cast, that party will fill 60% of the council seats taking from their list in the order each candidate was placed on the party list by the voters.

1. **Voter Choice** (+2) Depending on number of parties contending.
2. **Competitive Races** (+2) Same as PLC.
3. **Preventing "Spoiler" and "Sponge" Problems** (+2) Same as PLC.
4. **Minimizing Wasted Votes** (+2) Same as PLC.
5. **Majority Rule** (+2) Same as PLC.
6. **Representativeness** (+2) Same as PLC.
7. **Minority Inclusion** (+1) Same as PLC.
8. **Resistance to Gerrymandering** (+2) Same as PLC and CHA.
9. **Opportunity to Serve** (0) Same as PLC.

10. **Constituent Connection** (-1) Some councilors may have a stronger connection to the party than to their constituents.
11. **Accountability** (+1) Individual candidates are accountable to their core voters (who can defeat the councilor by selecting a different candidate from the same party). However, candidates are less accountable to party voters and their party platform than under PLC.
12. **Balancing Stability and Responsiveness** (+2) Same as PLO and CHA.
13. **Balancing Neighborhoods and the City** (-1) Same as PLO and CHA.
14. **Issues Focused Campaigns** (+1) Same as OPD
15. **Manageable Campaign Costs** (0) Same as OPD.
16. **Ease of Voter Use** (+2) PLO is extremely simple.
17. **Voter Participation** (+1) Same as PLC.
18. **Ease of Administration** (+1) Same as OPD.

19. Mixed Member Proportional (MMP)

Sometimes called the German system, MMP combines single seat districts (elected by plurality or instant runoff) for some council seats, with a citywide party list system for other council seats. Voters get both a candidate vote for their district and a party vote for additional citywide seats. Depending on how closely the district results mirror the citywide party vote, additional council seats are created and filled from the party lists so that every party has a total number of seats roughly proportionate to popular votes. Thus the size of the council may be adjusted as needed to assure proportionate results.

1. **Voter Choice** (+1) There will always be meaningful choices. The district races may offer narrow choices, while the choices in the party races depend on the number of parties contending.
2. **Competitive Races** (+2) Even if there is not a competitive race in a given district, the party vote is always competitive.
3. **Preventing "Spoiler" and "Sponge" Problems** (0) The spoiler dynamic, and thus the voter dilemma, persists if plurality voting is used for the district seats. However, this is compensated for in terms of overall council make-up by the supplemental seats that are based on party votes. Use of separate or instant runoff voting for district seats would raise this score to +2.
4. **Minimizing Wasted Votes** (+2) Even if a voter wastes his or her district vote, the party vote compensates and is rarely wasted.
5. **Majority Rule** (+2) Same as CHA.
6. **Representativeness** (+2) Same as PLC.
7. **Minority Inclusion** (+1) Same as PLC.

8. **Resistance to Gerrymandering** (+1) Although the districts can be gerrymandered, there is little incentive to do so, since the additional party seats will compensate.
9. **Opportunity to Serve** (+1) Parties can draw qualified candidates from any part of the city, and independents from locally dominant groups can win district races. However, minorities outside the party structure are effectively excluded.
10. **Constituent Connection** (+2) Voters can contact either a district councilor (for local concerns) or a party councilor for broader policy concerns.
11. **Accountability** (+1) District councilors can be targeted for removal. These councilors are more accountable to their local constituency, while party seat councilors are more accountable to the party and its platform.
12. **Balancing Stability and Responsiveness** (+2) Same as CHA.
13. **Balancing Neighborhoods and the City** (+2) Same as CHD.
14. **Issues Focused Campaigns** (+1) Same as OPD.
15. **Manageable Campaign Costs** (0) Same as OPD.
16. **Ease of Voter Use** (+2) Voters vote both for a district seat and a party.
17. **Voter Participation** (+1) Voters who favor any of the contending parties have an incentive to participate, as do those with competitive district races.
18. **Ease of Administration** (+1) Same as OPD.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

A useful exercise might be to assign weighted values (from 0 to 10) to the criteria based on how important you feel each is in your city. For example, you might decide that "opportunity to serve" is of no concern and give it a weight of zero, that "ease of administration" is of some importance and give it a weight of three, that "majority rule" is critical and give it a weight of ten and so on. Next, multiply the assigned weight for each criterion by the performance scores in the different areas (from -2 to +2) for the election methods listed in the table at the center of this booklet. Once each weighted criterion has been multiplied by the performance score for a particular method, these products can be added together so that a total score for that method is arrived at. Some election methods will likely end up with negative totals and others with positive ones -- with the highest positive score being the best election method, according to the values of the person or group carrying out the exercise.

SOME ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Q. Doesn't the nomination process also have a major impact on the election process?

A. Yes. A wide variety of nomination options exist including gathering petitions, party caucus, and primary elections. However, the pros and cons of the various options are beyond the scope of this booklet.

Q. What about partisan vs. nonpartisan elections - is one system inherently better than the other?

A. No. Studies have found only slight differences in terms of impact on representation. In the United States the prevalence of one system or the other is primarily a result of regional differences and local custom.   Most cities using partisan elections are in the Eastern United States, while nonpartisan elections are typical in the Western U.S.   Even cities using nominally nonpartisan elections frequently have candidates trumpeting their partisan endorsements in any event.

Q. I've heard Israel and Italy cited as examples of full representation functioning poorly. Does full representation cause unstable governments, or give undue power to small parties?

A. No. The majority of governments elected using full representation are stable and moderate, with small parties playing a "junior" role. Italy and Israel have unique characteristics th 35 make them exceptions. Full representation is the norm among many developed democracies that exhibit no such problems. Most countries using full representation (unlike Israel) require a substantial level of support to win seats, and do not experience Israel's or Italy's political turmoil. Problems mistakenly attributed to full representation are typically the result of a parliamentary system (as distinct from full representation), where the executive is chosen by the legislative branch and can "fall" when a coalition party withdraws its support. Direct popular election of the executive (president of mayor) avoids this dynamic.

Q. Our city currently uses staggered terms to prevent wholesale replacement of councilors and loss of institutional memory. Is this an important precaution?

A. No. City council elections generally have a lower rate of incumbency return than the overwhelmingly high rates for state and federal Houses of Representatives. Yet according to a national study 85% of incumbent city councilors who seek re-election are victorious. The rate of incumbency return under *all* election methods, even winner-take-all election systems, is very high. Institutional memory is hardly endangered, regardless of whether council seats are filled by staggered or simultaneous elections.

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