



**CITYWIDE SINGLE VOTE  
FOR CITY COUNCIL  
COMMUNICATIONS PLAN**

Last updated: Jan. 8, 2026

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## Executive Summary

In November 2024, the San Luis Obispo City Council approved the transition to Citywide Single Vote for the election of City Council Members. This change, adopted as part of a settlement agreement related to the California Voting Rights Act, keeps the current at-large election system while advancing equity and protecting against vote dilution in local elections. Under the new system, voters will cast one vote to elect a City Council candidate, even though two open seats are up for election every two years. The two candidates who receive the highest number of votes Citywide will be elected to the available seats.

The City engaged Tripepi Smith in July 2025 to develop a comprehensive communications plan to educate the community about the City's transition to a Citywide Single Vote for Council and ensure voters are well-informed ahead of the 2026 General Election.

The primary goals of this communications plan are to

1. Clearly inform residents about the change
2. Encourage voter registration
3. Provide clear direction on how to vote to prevent invalid ballots
4. Support voter turnout that meets or surpasses previous election levels

Tripepi Smith worked closely with the City Council and City staff to develop a plan that reaches all eligible voters. The strategy incorporates feedback from Council, staff, and the community, and outlines the key outreach and engagement tactics that will be used throughout the initiative.

## Developing the Communications Plan

The City of San Luis Obispo began working with Tripepi Smith, a nationally recognized marketing, technology, and public affairs consulting firm, in the summer of 2025 to develop a comprehensive communications plan to support the transition to a Citywide Single Vote for City Council.

To inform the plan, extensive information and feedback were gathered over several months. Tripepi Smith reviewed public records from prior City Council discussions, including materials related to the pre-litigation settlement of the California Voting Rights Act demand from the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project (SVREP). The consultant also conducted virtual interviews with City Council members and key City staff across leadership, legal, elections, communications, and diversity, equity, and inclusion roles.

City staff additionally met with the San Luis Obispo County Clerk-Recorder's Office to gain regional expertise on voter education, outreach best practices, and key considerations from elections professionals. The City will continue to work closely with the Clerk-Recorder's Office, which serves as the community's Elections Office and a primary resource for voters.

To further guide outreach efforts, the City conducted a community survey to better understand voting habits, preferred communication channels, and awareness of the upcoming change. Survey results indicate that many residents are not yet aware of the transition or how the new voting system will work, and that voters want clear, simple, and easy-to-understand information. The findings also highlight the need for tailored outreach strategies, including culturally responsive, in-language engagement for Spanish-speaking and bilingual residents, and plain-language explanations, visuals, and printed materials. The full survey analysis can be found in Appendix 2.

City staff also shared an outline of the communications plan with the Human Relations Commission and incorporated feedback on messaging and audience engagement.

All feedback gathered through this process has been integrated into the final communications plan to ensure it reflects community needs, best practices, and the City's internal capacity.

# External Audiences

## San Luis Obispo Demographics Overview

*This information was sourced from the City’s website and the 2020 Census.*

Category	Details
City Size	Approximately 13.47 square miles
Population	47,757
Median Age	30
Age Distribution	0-19: 22.2% 20-39: 38.5% 40-59: 17.5% 60-79: 17% 80 and older: 4.5%
Race and Ethnicity	White (non-Hispanic): 66% Hispanic: 23% Asian: 6% Black: 1% Multiracial: 3%
Multilingual Households	17% speak languages other than English Of the 17%, approximately 11% speak Spanish
Eligible Voters (Citizen Voting Age Population)	41,275
Registered Voters	29,505
Historical Average Voter Turnout of Registered Voters	Presidential Election Turnout (2024, 2020, 2016): 85.25% Midterm Election Turnout (2022, 2018, 2014): 63.70%

## Target Audience & Community Partners

To enhance voter participation and education about the Citywide Single Vote for Council, the City intends to reach all registered voters and eligible unregistered voters. In addition, the City will execute targeted outreach to historically marginalized and traditionally hard-to-reach groups to increase voter registration and understanding.

The City plans to collaborate with several local neighborhood and community groups, pending their agreement, including but not limited to:

- English as a second language (ESL) groups
- Latine organizations
- Local business owners and employees

- HOAs
- Renter groups
- High school seniors
- School Districts and Parent associations and groups
- Cal Poly & Cuesta College
- Community and civic organizations (list included in Appendix 3)
- Faith-based organizations (list included in Appendix 3)
- City's media list

## Branding Assets and Messaging

### On-Brand Graphic and Visuals

To differentiate from other City outreach and garner widespread community participation, the City of SLO will develop distinct branding for the Citywide Single Vote for Council initiative. A unified visual identity will reinforce the initiative's credibility; it makes communication clearer and more accessible, helps the initiative stand out against the City's broader communications, and ensures a cohesive experience across platforms, whether someone sees a social media post, flyer, or sign in the community.

The new on-brand graphic will include the City's color palette and a tagline specific to the outreach efforts for this initiative. These items should be used on all communications related to the Citywide Single Vote for Council to consistently highlight the importance of this process.

### Key Messages

It is important for voters to understand why this single vote carries more impact than their two votes did before, or than by-district voting would as an alternative. To help voters understand this impact, the following key messages and talking points should be used throughout this voter education campaign:

- 1. You get to vote in every election and put all your support behind your preferred candidate.**
  - In the previous City Council elections, voters could cast votes for two candidates. Often, voters only selected one candidate. In by-district elections (an alternative not in effect in San Luis Obispo), voters would only get to participate in elections for City Council Members every other year. They would only be allowed to vote for a candidate who lives in their district, even if they prefer a candidate in another district.
  - With Citywide Single Vote for Council, all voters will continue participating in every election and may select any candidate they believe best represents their priorities, regardless of where in the City the voter or their preferred candidate lives.
- 2. Your single vote carries more weight because every candidate must earn focused support.**
  - With only one vote, no singular group can boost multiple preferred candidates at once.
  - Candidates are also less able to rely on second-choice votes.

- This can create more space for new voices and candidates to gain meaningful support.
  - This can help create opportunity for candidates who might not have had the same opportunity in a system where one larger group can vote for multiple people.
- 3. Smaller or minority communities or coalitions of smaller groups with shared priorities can unite to more effectively support a single candidate.**
- With only one vote, communities with shared priorities often build broader coalitions so they can unite support for a candidate across different groups.
  - This can help connect communities or neighborhoods that may not have previously collaborated, fostering relationships that extend beyond an election cycle.
  - This allows for more collaboration and coalition-building to make a real difference in who wins the election.

## Community Engagement Framework

### Communications Goals

1. Clearly inform residents about the change
2. Encourage voter registration
3. Provide clear direction on how to vote to prevent invalid ballots
4. Support voter turnout that meets or surpasses previous election levels

### Measures of Success

These key performance indicators were formulated based on data from the community survey and the County of San Luis Obispo Registrar of Voters reported election results from the 2022, 2018, and 2014 midterm elections.

1. Meet or exceed the number of registered voters in 2026 and future elections.
2. Meet or decrease number of overvotes from 0.15% in 2026 and future elections.
3. Meet or exceed average voter turnout levels of 64% in 2026 and future elections.

### Outreach Strategy

The City will implement a **three-phase, multimedia, and bilingual outreach strategy** to educate residents about the new Citywide Single Vote for Council, encourage voter registration, reduce ballot errors, and support voter participation in the 2026 General Election.

The approach uses a wide mix of communication tools, which includes community meetings, a dedicated website landing page, printed and mailed materials, videos, social media, paid advertising, media outreach, and in-person engagement at events and neighborhoods. These tools will be designed to ensure residents receive clear, consistent information.

Outreach will be conducted in both English and Spanish, with interpretation and culturally responsive engagement provided throughout. The City will remain adaptable and will meet regularly with a community working group to gather feedback and refine messaging as the voter engagement campaign progresses.

### Regular, Recurring Monthly Outreach Tactics

The City will use the following channels to maintain consistent updates and ensure residents receive regular information about the change to the Citywide Single Vote for Council and the 2026 General Election.

Outreach Tactic	Details
Social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-4 posts, stories, or reels per month</li> </ul>
Emails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 dedicated email per month, incorporated into regular newsletters</li> <li>• The City will work directly with the County Clerk-Recorder’s Office and non-partisan groups to get emails out to voters.</li> </ul>
Monthly community working group meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This group will be composed of specific stakeholders among the City’s target audiences. The goal is to gather ongoing feedback and suggestions on messaging and ensure the City’s outreach is impactful.</li> <li>• The group should consist of no more than 15 volunteers.</li> <li>• The City may provide meals during meetings.</li> </ul>
Pop-up tables at regular City events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The City will identify which events to attend and whether partner agencies are able to support.</li> <li>• The City may tap volunteer photographers to take pictures of these events for social media and promotion.</li> <li>• Event opportunities are listed in Appendix 1.</li> </ul>
Monthly media engagement pitches, news releases or interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The City will connect with media outlets to earn coverage about this change.</li> </ul>
Community organization/neighborhood pop-up meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with local groups to share information about the effort at their regular meetings or related events. At least two meetings per month is ideal.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Please view Appendix 3 for a list of possible organizations.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Host neighborhood pop-up tents and tables in high-traffic locations to inform nearby community members.</li> <li>• The neighborhood pop-ups are an opportunity to go directly to target audiences and provide information; whereas the community organization meetings are an opportunity to present information at existing regularly</li> </ul>

	scheduled meetings among community groups (e.g., Rotary, Latino Outreach Council, etc.)
Partner and Volunteer Coordination (as resources allow)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with organizations, community groups, and volunteers to execute door knocking (as resources allow), emails, phone calls, and other direct outreach to notify residents of this change. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Partners may include, but are not limited to Cal Poly ASI, SLO Chamber, League of Women Voters, Latino Outreach Council, Cuesta</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

### Fixed Deliverables

- 1 explainer video that can be clipped into shorter reels for social media
- 3 Every Door Direct Mailers (EDDM) (citywide)
- 3 Printed Flyers
- 2 Rounds of Bus Shelter/Interior Bus Ads
- 4 Downtown Banners
- 4 Press Releases
- 6 Community Meetings (3 Virtual, 3 In-Person meetings)
  - In-person community meeting locations may include: SLO County Library, Ludwick Community Center, Neighborhood parks, Senior Center, Cal Poly campus, and schools.
  - Community meetings should be held on weekday evenings, with some weekend options.
- Standard presentation for outreach meetings
- 8 Digital Advertisements (Meta, YouTube, Google)
- Radio/Streaming Advertisements
- Media Advertisements (print, digital, TV)

### Outreach Timeline

This initiative will span roughly 10 months and include three distinct phases designed to educate and empower SLO residents to confidently participate in the 2026 General Election and future elections.

While the City will provide consistent information and engagement throughout, the phased structure allows residents to become fully familiar with the details over time while ensuring the City allocates its resources effectively. The third phase directly aligns with the County Clerk-Recorder’s Office to reinforce standard election messaging.

### Timeline

- **Phase 1, January – June: Awareness & Understanding**
  - Enhance citywide awareness and understanding of the Citywide Single Vote for Council. Educate voters and potential voters on why voting is changing and how it benefits them.

- **Key Messages:** What's changing, why it's happening, and how it benefits voters.
  - A new voting method begins in November 2026.
  - This change improves fairness and avoids costly legal challenges to the City's election system.
  - Every voter continues to have a voice in electing every Council Member, and the process stays simple: vote for one, top two win.
  - Every candidate remains accountable to every voter in the City
- **Phase 2, June – September: Voter Registration & Empowerment**
  - Target outreach to ensure that voters, especially eligible non-registered voters, know how to register to vote and how to vote successfully. Focus on candidate education.
  - **Key messages:** Why registering matters and how this new method strengthens each vote.
    - Registering early ensures you can fully participate in SLO's first Citywide Single Vote election.
    - Your vote has more impact when you choose the one candidate who best represents your vision and values.
    - This system makes it easier for community voices and diverse candidates to gain meaningful support.
- **Phase 3, September – November: Voting Successfully**
  - Amplify County messaging and provide reminders leading up to Election Day to encourage registration and ensure residents understand what the ballot looks like and where to vote.
  - **Key Messages:** How to fill out the ballot correctly and confidently.
    - Vote for One. Top Two Win.
    - For City Council, you will vote for only one candidate.
    - The two candidates with the most votes citywide will be elected.
    - Follow the ballot instructions, return your ballot on time, and get your vote counted.

The following schedule outlines the planned deliverable production throughout the initiative. Tactics may change depending on each performance review.

Month	Outreach Task	Staff Assigned	Date Completed
January	Audit/update webpage to reflect the latest FAQs and project overview		
	Add homepage banner/widget to website		
	Develop talking points		
	Brief Council and staff		
	Work with GIS to determine neighborhoods or areas to target for door-to-door outreach, based on demographic data		
	Work with the Volunteer Coordinator to develop a manageable volunteer program		
	Form a community working group. This group will provide ongoing feedback and suggestions throughout the process		
	Begin planning and scheduling community meetings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- February - virtual</li> <li>- March - in-person</li> <li>- May - in-person</li> <li>- June - virtual</li> <li>- September - virtual</li> <li>- October - in-person</li> </ul>		
	Begin scheduling presentations at existing community organization/partner meetings and build out standard presentation deck		
	Begin social media and email outreach. This should include coordination with Nextdoor neighborhoods leads		
	Begin branding rollout		
	Create one comprehensive informational video, which can then be split into 3-4 shorter clips for YouTube shorts and Instagram/Facebook reels. The video segments should cover a brief overview of the Citywide Single Vote for Council, why the City is making this change, how to fill out a ballot successfully, and how to register to vote		

February	Issue initial news release about the Citywide Single Vote for Council, including background information, updated website information, and upcoming meeting and event dates		
	Distribute social media		
	Distribute information via e-newsletter		
	Hold community working group meeting #1		
	Establish coordination with Cal Poly, Cuesta, the Chamber of Commerce, DTSLO, and other interested community groups		
	Begin scheduling pop-ups at various events		
	Establish volunteer program		
	Begin TV news coordination		
	Hold community meeting #1 (virtual). This meeting should explain the Citywide Single Vote for Council, why the election system is changing, and how it affects voters. The meeting should be recorded and distributed across the City's digital channels. Note the final number of attendees		
March	Develop and print flyers, signage and banners. Ensure Spanish-language materials are reviewed by partners. Flyers and signs should be consistent with branding. Flyers should explain the 'what' and 'why' of the change. These should include simple, visual explanations. The banner should align with initial education about the change		
	Distribute flyers to community hubs		
	Post flyer downloads online		

	Develop and distribute the first bilingual EDDM mailer explaining the Citywide Single Vote for Council, why the election system is changing, and how residents can learn more. The Spanish copy should be reviewed by partners		
	Run banner 1 from March 16-22		
	Distribute social media		
	Distribute information via e-newsletter		
	Call for volunteers and volunteer training opportunities		
	Hold community working group meeting #2		
	Begin targeted outreach to historically marginalized groups		
	Continue scheduling pop-ups at various events		
	Distribute a social media toolkit with the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Core messaging points</li> <li>- Related hashtags</li> <li>- Ready-to-post content and graphics</li> <li>- FAQs</li> <li>- Contact information</li> </ul>		
	Launch the first round of digital ads across Meta, Google, and Nextdoor. These should be evergreen content about the change that focus on awareness and link to the website for more information.		
	Hold community meeting #2 (in-person). This meeting should explain the Citywide Single Vote for Council, why the election system is changing, and how it affects voters. Note the final number of attendees		
April	Hold community working group meeting #3		
	Distribute social media		
	Distribute information via e-newsletter		
	Sustain historically marginalized outreach		
	Continue scheduling pop-ups at various events		

	Begin canvassing neighborhoods and door-to-door outreach with volunteers		
	Collaborate with community groups to initiate phone call and email outreach to historically marginalized communities		
	Issue the next news release highlighting community meeting recordings, new FAQs, and upcoming meetings and events		
	Pitch an explainer story or interview to news outlets		
	Develop bilingual radio and TV concepts for the following channels: Radio: KCBX 90.1 FM, KXTZ 95.3 FM, The Krush 92.5 FM TV: KSBY, KEYT-YV, Telemundo, KKFX-CD		
	Develop newspaper ads for the following publications: The Tribune, New Times		
	Conduct first review metrics from January through March, including: - Website traffic: Page views - Social media performance: Likes, comments, shares, follower growth - Ad performance: Impressions, click-through rates, conversions, reach - Partner engagement: Number of partners, number of outreach tasks completed (by type) - Email sign-ups: Number of recipients and list growth, open rates, click rates - Meeting attendance: Number of participants at workshops and meetings, pop-up events attended, presentations given at community organization meetings		
May	Hold community working group meeting #4		
	Sustain historically marginalized outreach		

	Distribute social media. Begin integrating voter registration messaging. Ensure this messaging aligns with the County's messaging		
	Distribute information via e-newsletter		
	Update the FAQ language across platforms to include voter registration information and how to vote successfully		
	Update the website to include voter registration information and how to vote successfully		
	Continue scheduling pop-ups at various events		
	Continue neighborhood canvassing and door-to-door outreach with volunteers		
	Brief Council and staff on updated FAQs. This should incorporate findings from the metrics evaluation		
	Launch the second round of ads on Meta, YouTube, and Nextdoor. The Meta and Nextdoor ads should promote the upcoming community meetings		
	Refresh flyers		
	Develop and distribute the second bilingual EDDM mailer explaining how voters, especially eligible non-registered voters, can register to vote and vote successfully		
June	Hold community working group meeting #5		
	Distribute social media		
	Distribute information via e-newsletter		
	Sustain historically marginalized outreach		
	Continue scheduling pop-ups at various events		
	Continue neighborhood canvassing and door-to-door outreach with volunteers		

	Hold community meeting #3 (in-person) – Educate voters, especially eligible non-registered voters, on how to register to vote and how to vote successfully		
	Begin preparing candidate and candidate orientation materials. These should explain the change and include key talking points to educate the public		
	Run banner 2 from June 1-7. This should focus on additional education		
July	Align election deadlines and materials with the County. This is a transition period now that the election information is out		
	Share toolkits with candidates		
	Hold community working group meeting #6		
	Distribute social media		
	Distribute information via e-newsletter		
	Sustain historically marginalized outreach		
	Continue scheduling pop-ups at various events		
	Continue neighborhood canvassing and door-to-door outreach with volunteers		
	Begin sharing official election information with residents, including deadlines, registration information, etc.		
	Begin running radio/TV/newspaper placements mid-July		
	Hold community meeting #4 (virtual) – Educate voters, especially eligible non-registered voters, on how to register to vote and how to vote successfully. Record this meeting and distribute it across the City's digital channels		

	<p>Conduct second review of metrics from April through June, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Website traffic: Page views</li> <li>- Social media performance: Likes, comments, shares, follower growth</li> <li>- Ad performance: Impressions, click-through rates, conversions, reach,</li> <li>- TV/radio/newspaper ad placements: number of placements, placement dates/times, outlets</li> <li>- Partner engagement: Number of partners, number of outreach tasks completed (by type)</li> <li>- Email sign-ups: Number of recipients and list growth, open rates, click rates</li> <li>- Meeting attendance: Number of participants at workshops and meetings, pop-up events attended, presentations given at community organization meetings</li> <li>- Media coverage: volume, tone and reach of news stories, press mentions</li> </ul> <p>Run a benchmark survey to gauge the percentage increase of survey respondents who say they are aware of the change.</p>		
August	<p>Hold community working group meeting #7</p> <p>Distribute social media</p> <p>Distribute information via e-newsletter</p> <p>Sustain historically marginalized outreach</p> <p>Develop/distribute “How to Vote” resources</p> <p>Partner with Cal Poly on student outreach. This should include dorms, student organizations, and orientation events</p> <p>Continue scheduling pop-ups at various events</p> <p>Continue neighborhood canvassing and door-to-door outreach with volunteers</p> <p>Launch the third round of ads on Meta, Google, and Nextdoor. These should be evergreen about how to vote successfully</p> <p>Issue the next press release. This should share new resources, key reminders, and upcoming meeting and event dates</p>		

September	Produce and review new FAQs heading into the final phase		
	Print/distribute County “How to Vote” materials		
	Hold community working group meeting #8		
	Distribute social media		
	Distribute information via e-newsletter		
	Sustain historically marginalized outreach		
	Continued Cal Poly outreach		
	Continue scheduling pop-ups at various events		
	Continue neighborhood canvassing and door-to-door outreach with volunteers. This should focus on high-traffic student areas		
	Develop and distribute the third bilingual EDDM mailer reinforcing key reminders, upcoming meetings and deadlines		
	Run banner 3 from Sept. 21-27. This should share voter information and align with the third EDDM mailer		
	Launch the final round of ads on Meta, YouTube, and Nextdoor. The Meta and Nextdoor ads should promote the upcoming community meetings		
	Continue radio/TV/newspaper placements from mid-September to mid-October		
Hold community meeting #5 (virtual) – Review refreshed FAQs and voting logistics. Record meeting and distribute it across the City's digital channels			
October	Boost County messages		
	Hold community working group meeting #9		
	Distribute social media		
	Distribute information via e-newsletter		
	Sustain historically marginalized outreach		

	Final pop-up events. These should aim to clarify voting logistics and clarify any details about the change		
	Hold meeting #6 (in-person) – Review refreshed FAQs and voting logistics		
	Wrap up radio/TV/newspaper ads in early October		
	Distribute final pre-election press release. The press release should summarize all key election information and deadlines.		
	Conduct door-knocking as needed with volunteers. This should be targeted at low-turnout areas		
	Run banner 4 from Oct. 26-Nov. 1. This should share final voter reminders		
November	Distribute daily or weekly countdown posts on social media		
	Send email reminders about election. Focus messaging on polling hours, ballot drop-offs, and reminders on how to vote		
	Distribute thank you messaging		
	Conduct final review of metrics encompassing entire outreach timeline, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Website traffic: Page views</li> <li>- Social media performance: Likes, comments, shares, follower growth</li> <li>- Ad performance: Impressions, click-through rates, conversions, reach,</li> <li>- TV/radio/newspaper ad placements: number of placements, placement dates/times, outlets</li> <li>- Partner engagement: Number of partners, number of outreach tasks completed (by type)</li> <li>- Email sign-ups: Number of recipients and list growth, open rates, click rates</li> <li>- Meeting attendance: Number of participants at workshops and meetings, pop-up events attended, presentations given at community organization meetings</li> <li>- Media coverage: volume, tone and reach of news stories, press mentions</li> <li>- Insights into overall sentiment and voter turnout</li> </ul>		
	Conduct final reporting		

## Outreach Budget

The following budget outlines the recommended allocation for each major outreach tactic. Budget outreach will cost approximately \$110,000, with \$80,000 allocated through June 2026 and \$30,000 for the 2026-2027 fiscal year. The City remains flexible to adjusting budget allocations based on the performance evaluations.

Outreach Tactic	Budgeted Cost
Branding	\$3,000
3 EDDM Mailers	\$33,000
Physical Signage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Street banners</li> <li>• Flyers</li> <li>• Bus cards and transit booklet</li> </ul>	\$8,500
Print, TV, and Radio Ads <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newspaper (Tribune, New Times)</li> <li>• TV (KSBY, KEYT-TV, Telemundo, KKFX-CD)</li> <li>• Radio (KCBX 90.1 FM, KXTZ 95.3 FM, The Krush 92.5 FM, KSJV 92.9, KMLM 107.3)</li> </ul>	\$45,000
Digital Ads <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Google Ads (2 \$1,000 ads)</li> <li>• Meta Ads (4 \$500 ads)</li> <li>• YouTube Ads (2 \$1,000 ads)</li> <li>• Nextdoor Ads (4 \$500 ads)</li> </ul>	\$8,000
Translations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost for six meetings</li> </ul>	\$4,200
Community Meetings/Partnership Sponsorships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waters, snacks, print-outs, etc.</li> <li>• Door knocking, phone calls, pop-ups, etc.</li> </ul>	\$3,000
Contingency	\$5,300
<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>\$110,000</b>

## Appendix

### Appendix 1: Pop-Up Event Opportunities

#### February

- February ECOSLO Tree Planting at Johnson Ranch
- Lunar New Year celebration

#### March

- Free Compost Giveaway

#### April

- SLO Earthfest 2026
- Spring Fling at Meadow Park
- Downtown SLO Walk for Autism and Resource Fair
- Arbor Day at the park

#### May

- Bike Month - Bike Breakfast

#### June

- Concerts in the Plaza
- Juneteenth celebration
- Pride in the Plaza & Trans Pride in the Park

#### July

- Annual San Luis Obispo Triathlon
- Cal Poly orientations
- Concerts in the Plaza

#### August

- Concerts in the Plaza
- SLO County Libraries' free Back-to-School Extravaganza
- Cal Poly Week of Welcome events (ex: Campus Comeback)
- Cuesta College orientation (ex: Cougar Welcome Days)

#### September

- Concerts in the Plaza
- September Scramble
- San Luis Obispo High School Homecoming Game and Alumni Welcome
- Creeks to Coast Cleanup Day

## October

- Belonging Project Series
- Boo Bash

## Additional Opportunities

- Chamber of Commerce events
- City adult recreation events and activities
- City blood drives
- City Senior Center events
- City youth sports events and activities
- Community Clean Ups
- County voter registration events
- Downtown SLO events
- Downtown SLO Thursday Night Farmers' Market
- Dia De Los Muertos (November)
- HOA meetings
- Latino Outreach Council
- Residents for Quality Neighborhoods meetings
- SLO County Art After Dark events
- SLOMA events
- School district multilingual events

## Appendix 2: Survey Results and Analysis



# CITY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO

Voter Survey Analysis and Recommendations

## Survey Summary & Communications Analysis for the 2026 City Council Election Change

### Executive Summary

Beginning with the **November 2026 General Election**, San Luis Obispo voters will use a new election method for City Council called **Citywide Single Vote**.

The City Council held a public hearing in November 2024 and approved the change at that time to increase fair, diverse representation among local government. Citywide Single Vote for Council **ensures that all voters can continue to vote in every City Council election and that minority groups have a better chance of electing the candidate who best represents them**. San Luis Obispo is adopting Citywide Single Vote because it is the **simplest, fairest, and most effective way** to strengthen equitable voting in our community.

The City Council agreed to this change as an **alternative to switching to district elections**, which would not only be costly but would also not increase Latino representation because SLO's Latino/Latine community lives across the entire city and not in one area where a district could meaningfully increase voting power. The Citywide Single Vote model **gives every voter an equal voice in every election, keeps elections citywide, supports community coalition-building, and avoids the unintended harms and high costs** associated with districting. Ultimately, this approach allows SLO to meet state requirements, avoid costly lawsuits, and build a stronger, more inclusive future for all voters.

Under the new system, **voters will cast one vote to elect a City Council candidate** even when multiple seats are open. The candidates who receive the highest number of votes Citywide will be elected to the available seats. The role of the City Council, the number of seats, and the timing of elections will remain the same. If the City had changed to the district election model, voters would only be allowed to vote in every other City Council election.

In November 2025, the City surveyed community members to better understand current awareness of this change and communications preferences. The survey was conducted for 23 days and collected 464 responses.

Survey results show that many community members, across languages and ages, **are not yet aware of this change and want clear, simple explanations of how the new voting process works**. People asked for sample ballots, visual walkthroughs, and step-by-step guides. Many also shared how they prefer to get information, including social media, email, the City website, printed mail, local news, and community meetings.

The City is committed to ensuring that every voter – regardless of background, language, or preferred method of communication – has the information they need to participate successfully in the 2026 General Election. The following is an analysis of the survey results and related recommendations for outreach and communications.



### Purpose of the Survey

The City of San Luis Obispo conducted this voter-awareness and engagement survey to help shape its **public education and outreach plan** for the November 2026 General Election, when a major change will appear on voters' ballots for the first time. The goal is to ensure all voters are **well-informed**, understand **how to fill out their ballot correctly**, and feel **confident** participating in the election.

### High-Level Findings Across All Respondents

#### 1. Awareness of the Voting Change Is Low

A significant share of respondents across all demographic groups had **not heard** about the coming election change. Many expressed confusion about:

- Why the City is adopting Citywide Single Vote
- How it affects their ballot
- How many candidates they can vote for
- Whether the change impacts representation

This shows a clear need for **early, plain-language education**.

#### 2. The Voting Process Is Not Yet Clear to Many Voters

Regardless of background, many respondents indicated:

- They are uncertain how the new process works
- They want the City to provide **simple explanations, examples, and visual aids**
- They are concerned about making mistakes on their ballot

Respondents specifically asked for:

- **Sample ballots**
- **Step-by-step illustrations**
- **Short videos or animations**

#### 3. Preferred Information Sources Vary Widely

The survey confirms that the City must use a **multi-channel approach** to reach all voter groups.

Top channels overall:

- Social media
- Direct mail and printed materials
- Local news websites/newspaper
- City website
- Community meetings or workshops
- Word of mouth

#### 4. Key Barriers to Voting

Motivators include **civic duty** and **wanting to influence decisions that affect daily life**. Barriers cited include:



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- Not receiving clear information in time
- Confusion about rules
- Limited free time
- A lack of understanding about local issues

### Latine, Spanish-Speaking & Bilingual Voter Analysis

These groups represent an important portion of the electorate, and the survey revealed **distinct patterns** that warrant focused attention.

#### Awareness & Clarity

- 75% of Latine respondents had not previously heard of the Citywide Single Vote change.
- 61% said the new process is not clear to them.

This points to a major opportunity to provide **more in-language, culturally relevant, and visual information well ahead of the 2026 election.**

#### Where Latine Voters Get Information

Latine respondents are more likely to rely on **trusted personal and community networks**, indicating that relationship-driven outreach will be particularly effective. According to the survey, this group gets their information via:

1. Social media
2. Direct mail
3. Word of mouth (higher than other groups)
4. Local news websites
5. City website
6. Community meetings

#### Preferred Ways to Receive Information

Latine respondents value tangible information and are highly receptive to bilingual printed materials sent directly to their homes. Top preferences include:

1. Direct mail
2. Social media
3. Printed materials
4. Newspaper
5. Community workshops

#### Additional Considerations for Spanish-Speaking Households

Even with a smaller sample size, Spanish-speaking households consistently showed:

- Lower awareness
- Higher reliance on word of mouth
- Strong desire for Spanish-first, not "translated-once-clicked," communication
- Preference for meetings at schools, parks, and community centers



### Non-Latine / Non-Bilingual Voter Analysis

These respondents showed different, but equally important, preferences and needs.

Many expressed skepticism or confusion about:

- Why the City is adopting Citywide Single Vote
- Whether the change is political
- How it impacts representation

Respondents across demographics, but especially non-Latine voters, requested:

- Sample ballots
- Explanatory graphics
- Side-by-side comparisons of the old versus new systems

Non-bilingual respondents rely more heavily on:

- Email newsletters
- City website
- Local news websites
- Online research

Non-Latine respondents showed stronger preference for:

- Virtual meetings (Zoom/Teams)
- On-demand recordings

These respondents trust:

- Local newspapers
- Candidate forums
- Neighborhood associations
- Chambers, nonprofits, civic groups

Older adults (65+) want:

- Printed materials
- Newspaper content
- In-person help

### Recommendations for Latine/Spanish-Speaking/Bilingual Outreach

To ensure equitable access to election information:

1. Provide bilingual materials (Spanish & English) **for all outreach formats**.
2. Use **social media, direct mail, and printed materials** as primary channels.
3. Partner with **trusted organizations and messengers** (Latino Outreach Council, faith groups, Promotores, Cal Poly/Cuesta affinity groups).
4. Host **bilingual community meetings** with **live interpretation** and **visual demonstrations**.
5. Create **Spanish-language videos, radio spots, and flyers with QR codes** linking to bilingual election resources.
6. **Feature Latino community members** in outreach materials to build trust and relatability.



### Recommendations for Non-Latine Voter Outreach

1. **Provide visual examples and walkthroughs.** Develop short explainer videos and visual graphics that simplify the process.
2. **Clarify the “why” behind the change.**
  - Use plain language to explain that the change complies with state law.
  - Provide a one-page “Why this change?” fact sheet.
  - Reinforce neutrality, transparency, and legal context in all messaging.
3. **Expand digital outreach**
  - Build a centralized, easy-to-navigate web hub for the election.
  - Promote email signups for election updates.
  - Use short, shareable videos across City social media accounts.
  - Recommendations: Provide virtual, evening meeting options
  - Schedule 20–30-minute virtual “Election 101” sessions with Q&A.
  - Provide recordings on the City’s website.
4. **Leverage local media and community organizations**
  - Provide press kits to local media
  - Offer City staff as subject-matter experts
  - Share ready-made slides and facts for organizations to distribute
5. **Tailor resources for older voters**
  - Offer high-contrast printed guides
  - Provide presentations at senior centers and libraries
  - Add easy-to-read mail inserts showing the ballot example

### Integrated Communications Strategy Recommendations

To reach all communities effectively, the City should implement a layered strategy that considers the distinct needs of diverse groups:

1. **Multi-channel outreach because no single channel reaches everyone**

Use:

  - Bilingual direct mail
  - Social media
  - Virtual and in-person meetings
  - Local news partnerships
  - Printed flyers
  - Website content and videos
2. **Plain-language, visual-forward education**

Across the entire sample:



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- Users want **simple, clear, visual** explanations.
- Provide graphics, examples, and a sample ballot.

#### 3. Cultural and linguistic responsiveness

For Latine and Spanish-speaking communities:

- Spanish-first content
- Culturally relevant imagery
- Trusted community partners
- Visual tools

For non-Latine communities:

- Neutral, fact-based messaging
- Detailed explanations of "why the change is happening"
- Digital access and virtual meetings

#### 4. Promote trusted messengers

Latine voters prefer word-of-mouth learning, while non-Latine voters prefer news outlets or official City emails. Use **messengers and channels tailored to each group**.

#### 5. Start outreach early and build momentum through 2026

The sooner voters understand the new process, the smoother the 2026 election will be.

## Sample Key Messages & Talking Points

The following are sample key messages and related talking points for why the change is happening, why district elections won't increase minority representation in SLO, and the benefits of this change to all voters.

### Why the City Is Changing Its Voting Method

The City of San Luis Obispo updating its voting method to **improve voter fairness** in a way that fits our city's unique demographics **to comply with state voting rights requirements, avoid costly litigation**, and **strengthen equitable participation** in local elections.

- The City received a formal letter demanding that the city change to district elections aligning with the California Voting Rights Act (CVRA), which aims to reduce the dilution of minority voters.
- There is no clear evidence of vote dilution under the previous at-large election system; however, the City recognized the legal and financial risks of prolonged litigation if a change was not made.
- Lawsuits are risky and can be very costly, diverting taxpayer dollars from other important City services. Other cities have faced multimillion dollar lawsuits even when the cities have won.
- State law strongly favors cities making election changes early, prior to lawsuits being filed.
- As part of a settlement agreement, the City agreed to keep elections citywide but reduce the number of votes per voter from two to one.



- Unlike ranked-choice or cumulative voting methods that are not certified for use in California, the Citywide Single Vote method is legally recognized, easy to understand, and can be implemented with the County's support.

### Why District Elections Would Not Increase Minority Representation

Switching to district elections could **weaken minority representation** here and **would not meaningfully increase Latino/Latine voting power** in San Luis Obispo because Latine residents live throughout the city rather than in a single concentrated area.

- There is no geographic area in SLO where Latino/Latine eligible voters make up a majority.
- Districts could unintentionally reduce Latino/Latine community influence.
- The data does not show racially polarized voting that would justify districts.
- Community feedback did not support district elections.

### Benefits of the Citywide Single Vote for All Voters

Citywide Single Vote is the **simplest, fairest, and most effective way** to strengthen equitable voting in our community. It gives **every voter an equal voice in every election, supports community coalition-building, and avoids unintended harm and high costs associated with districting.**

- A single vote increases fairness by preventing one majority group from taking all seats.
- Every voter still has a say in every City Council election.
- Citywide Single Vote supports coalition-building across neighborhoods.
- The method is simple and easy for voters to understand.
- The method is legally recognized, low-cost to implement, and compatible with County elections.
- The Citywide Single Vote method aligns with San Luis Obispo's goals to increase access to local government and create a greater sense of belonging and representation.

### Final Summary

The survey makes one thing clear: **voters want clarity, simplicity, and a sense of confidence** that they understand how to participate in the upcoming change to City Council elections.

Different communities require different communication strategies:

- **Latine, bilingual, and Spanish-speaking voters** need in-language, culturally resonant, relationship-based outreach supplemented by strong visual tools and bilingual printed materials.
- **Non-Latine voters** respond best to plain-language explanations, visual comparisons, transparent reasoning for the change, digital communication, and virtual access.

The City is committed to providing **clear, accessible information in both English and Spanish.**

By combining these approaches, the City can ensure that every voter receives the information they need to vote accurately and confidently in the November 2026 General Election.

## Appendix 3: Community Organization Groups

Organization
5Cities Homeless Coalition
AAPI SLO County
Access Central Coast
Access Support Network
Afrikan Black Collective
Alpenglow Industries
Assistance League
Banchan Foods
Behavioral Health Department
Big Brothers Big Sisters of San Luis Obispo County
Bishop's Peak Elementary PTA
Boys and Girls Club
Building a Better SLO
Cal Poly Black Academic Excellence Center
Cal Poly Black Student Union
Cal Poly Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship
Cal Poly Multicultural Center
Cal Poly Office of University Diversity and Inclusion
Cal Poly Office of University Diversity and Inclusion / Ethnic Studies
Cal Poly Student Diversity and Belonging
Central Coast Coalition for Undocumented Student Success
Central Coast Green Building Council
Central Coast Youth Chorus
City Farm SLO
Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo County (CAPSLO)
Community Counseling Center (CCC) of San Luis Obispo
Concussion Navigation Services
Conzona Women's Ensemble
Corazon Café SLO LLC
Corazon Latino
Court Appointed Special Advocates of San Luis Obispo County (CASA)
Cuesta College

<b>Cuesta College Foundation</b>
Disability Resource Center (Cal Poly)
<b>Disability Resource Center (Cuesta College)</b>
Dismantling Racism from the Inside Out / Bend the Arc
<b>Diversity Coalition SLO County</b>
Downtown SLO
<b>Economics of Being a Woman's Financial and Disaster Preparedness</b>
Family Care Network
<b>Family Matters Consulting</b>
Festival Mozaic
<b>Foundation for the Performing Arts Center</b>
Frederick Law Firm
<b>GALA Pride and Diversity Center</b>
Girl Scouts of California's Central Coast
<b>Hawthorne Elementary PTA</b>
History Center of SLO County
<b>Hospice of San Luis Obispo County</b>
Housing Authority San Luis Obispo
<b>Independent Living Resource Center, Inc</b>
Jack's Helping Hand, Inc
<b>Jewish Community Center Federation</b>
Laguna Middle School PTA
<b>Latino Outdoors</b>
Latino Outreach Council
<b>Leadership SLO</b>
Literacy for Life Organization
<b>Long Term Care Ombudsman Services of San Luis Obispo County</b>
Lumina Alliance
<b>Make the Extra Pass Foundation</b>
MCSC Women's Business Center
<b>Meals That Connect</b>
Mission Headstrong
<b>Mixteco / Indígena Community Organizing Project (MICOP)</b>

Monarch Hills Education
<b>Mujeres de Accion</b>
NAACP SLO County Chapter
<b>National Alliance on Mental Illness of SLO County (NAMI)</b>
Northern Chumash Tribal Council
<b>One Cool Earth</b>
Opera San Luis Obispo
<b>Orchestra Novo</b>
Parent Connection of SLO County
<b>PathPoint</b>
Peace Academy of the Science and Arts
<b>People's Self-Help Housing</b>
Pregnancy and Parenting Support of SLO County
<b>Promotoras</b>
Public Health Department
<b>RACE Matters SLO</b>
REACH
<b>Recovery Road Runners, Inc</b>
Restorative Partners
<b>Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. High School Scholarship Fund</b>
Richard Pancho Gonzalez Youth Foundation
<b>Salinan Tribe of SLO and Monterey Counties</b>
San Luis Coastal Education Foundation
<b>San Luis Coastal Unified School District</b>
San Luis Obispo Children's Museum
<b>San Luis Obispo Climate Coalition</b>
San Luis Obispo Committee for Education on Alcoholism (MiddleHouse)
<b>San Luis Obispo Legal Assistance Foundation (SLOLAF)</b>
SCORE
<b>Seeds</b>
Senior Volunteer Services
<b>Shower the People</b>
SLO Access for All

<b>SLO Association of Realtors</b>
SLO Botanical Garden
<b>SLO Chamber of Commerce</b>
SLO Classical Academy
<b>SLO County Arts Council</b>
SLO County Bicycle Coalition
<b>SLO County Community Foundation</b>
SLO County Office of Education
<b>SLO County UndocuSupport</b>
SLO Disabled American Veterans Memorial Chapter 45
<b>SLO Food Bank</b>
SLO Hillel
<b>SLO International Film Festival</b>
SLO Jazz Festival
<b>SLO Museum of Art</b>
SLO Noor Foundation
<b>SLO People's Kitchen</b>
SLO Repertory Theatre
<b>SLO Symphony</b>
SLO Tenants Union
<b>SLO Village</b>
SLO Vocal Arts Ensemble
<b>SLO Wind Orchestra</b>
SLOCAR Inc. dba Certified Auto Repair
<b>Smart Share Housing Solutions, Inc</b>
SPOKES
<b>Ten Over Studio</b>
Texture
<b>The San Luis Obispo Child Development Resource Center</b>
Tolosa Children's Dental Center
<b>Transitions Mental Health Association</b>
Tri-Counties Regional Center
<b>Twig and Arrow Salon</b>
United Cerebral Palsy of San Luis Obispo County
<b>United Church of Christ — Congregation</b>
United Methodist Church

<b>United Way of San Luis Obispo County</b>
Veterans' Services Office
<b>Visit SLOCAL</b>
YTT Northern Chumash Nonprofit Board
<b>YTT Northern Chumash Tribe</b>