

MINNEAPOLIS REDISTRICTING – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is Redistricting?

Redistricting involves setting boundaries on a map to create elective districts with equal populations. Whether people are voting in a local election, or a statewide or Congressional election, having districts with equal populations helps ensure there is fair representation no matter where you live. In Minneapolis, redistricting is a once-in-a-decade opportunity to help shape City government.

Why Do We Have to Redistrict?

The U.S. conducts a count of its residents (called the census) every ten years. The U.S. Constitution requires redrawing Congressional and state legislative district boundaries every ten years, reflecting population shifts identified in Federal census data. Population data are also used to **reapportion** (or redistribute) the 435 U.S. Representatives among the states. Based on 2010 Census data, Minnesota retained its eight Representatives; nationally, some states lost Congressional seats, and other states gained seats.

The focus for **redistricting** is equal representation. According to a U.S. Supreme Court decision, Congressional districts must be as equal as “practicable.” Requirements for Minnesota Senate and House and local government districts are a bit more flexible, but the district populations still need to be within 5 percent or so of each other.

Who Draws the Maps?

Redistricting happens on several levels.

For Minnesota’s Congressional districts: The Minnesota Legislature must use the 2010 Census data to develop legislation that determines boundaries for its eight Congressional districts. Legislative staff trained in the use of mapping software will produce maps at the direction of the committee charged with the task of redistricting. Minnesota’s Congressional district lines will change, some substantially, because populations have shifted. Outstate districts that have lost population will expand in geographic area; metro districts will mostly shrink in area.

For state legislative districts: The Legislature must also establish boundaries for the 67 Minnesota Senate and 134 House districts. Similar to changes anticipated for the Congressional districts, many outstate Senate districts will expand in area. Many districts in the metropolitan area will shrink in area as, relative to the outstate districts, their population has grown.

For local districts in Minneapolis: In 2010, Minneapolis voters approved a Charter amendment that gave authority for redistricting the City to the Charter Commission. In addition to the thirteen Minneapolis wards, the Charter Commission will set boundaries for the six Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board districts (three commissioners are also elected at large) and possibly also for the School District. These boundaries will change to reflect changes in the distribution and number of City residents.

While authority for approving final boundaries rests with the Charter Commission, the Charter Commission and an Advisory Group of up to nine members appointed by the Charter Commission (which together is called the Redistricting Group) will work with staff to prepare the maps.

When Does This Work Start and Finish?

The goal is to finish redistricting in advance of the 2012 elections. State Legislative committees have been identified and will begin crunching data early in 2011--they may finish the Congressional/State redistricting by the end of the legislative session. But there are several reasons redistricting may not happen that quickly.

First, redistricting focuses on a February 2012 deadline, so there is no requirement it be finished in 2011. The work must be done by February 2012 to allow time for candidates to establish a residence and file for office in advance of the August 2012 primary and November 2012 general election. The second reason why redistricting may not be completed in 2011 is that the Legislature is likely to focus on other priorities first, such as solving the state's budget crisis. Third, redistricting is contentious. In the last four decades, redistricting plans have often been vetoed (the executive and legislative branch have often been split politically) or ended up in court.

Minneapolis must complete its redistricting work within 60 days after the Legislature completes its task, or, if the Legislature has not finished, nineteen weeks before the August 2012 primary election, which would be by April 2012. Conversely, the Minneapolis Charter Commission cannot approve a final map before the Legislature (or the Courts) finishes the Congressional/State tasks.

How is Redistricting Accomplished?

For people interested in details about the State's work, there are resources on State websites. A good place to start is www.gis.leg.mn/html/redistricting.html.

Federal law requires districts to have equal populations and to allow racial and language minorities a fair opportunity to elect representatives of their choice. Providing this opportunity requires mapmakers to avoid "packing" (putting minorities into as few districts as possible) and "fracturing" (spreading minorities among so many districts that their voting power is diluted). Note that under the law, it is the effect, not the intent, of the plan that is important.

In Minneapolis, the Redistricting Group (the Charter Commission and Advisory Group) will work with nonpartisan staff skilled in using computer programs to crunch census data. Maps will go through a number of iterations based on feedback from the Redistricting Group and the public.

For Minneapolis, those drawing maps must consider a number of factors. The Charter requires the 13 wards to have populations that are within five percent of the City population divided by 13, to keep them as close in population as possible. Wards should be contiguous (an area within a common boundary) and compact (closer to round than to long and narrow) and not more than twice as long as wide, allowing for lakes. Wherever possible, Ward boundary lines should follow the centerline of street and run due East and West or North and South. In addition, the Charter Commission has established

several principles to guide redistricting, including keeping communities of interest (a group that shares common interests such as ethnic heritage or specific economic concerns) in one ward where possible and changing current boundaries as little as possible. The City Charter also requires at least four public hearings on redistricting, including two hearings to review a proposed map, before a vote by the Charter Commission.

How Can I Participate in Redistricting in Minneapolis?

The ways that you can participate include:

(1) Apply for membership on the Minneapolis Charter Commission. Openings are posted on the City's website at <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/boards-and-commissions/open/>. In the past, applications have used the City's open appointments process and form, which are described at www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/boards-and-commissions/Open-appointments-process.asp. Applications are linked from individual notices on the site.

(2) Apply for membership on the Advisory Group. The Charter Commission will appoint up to nine members at its May 2011 meeting. The application and job description are linked from the Charter Commission website at www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/charter-commission.

The Charter requires that Advisory Group members must be eligible Minneapolis voters, which imposes citizenship, residence and age requirements. Also, the Charter requires that members shall not currently be, or within two years previous to appointment have been, an elected official of municipal, county, state or federal government, nor an employee of a political party, nor a candidate in a primary or general election for a public office for which the ballot indicates a political party designation of candidates, nor an employee of City government. Election judges, paid or unpaid, are considered City employees and are therefore not eligible to serve on the Advisory Group. Please note that this is an unpaid position. Also, there will be a number of meetings, some at night, that members are expected to attend.

(3) Attend or track Redistricting Group meetings.

All meetings of the Charter Commission and Redistricting Group will be publicized about a week in advance. You can subscribe to meeting notices from the Charter Commission website at www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/charter-commission

Draft materials may be attached to meeting agendas on the website. Materials reviewed at the meetings will be attached to the meeting minutes.

(4) Submit ideas at public meetings or directly to the Redistricting Group.

The Charter Commission invites your comments. Please email ideas or documents to the Committee Coordinator, Peggy Menshek, at peggy.menshek@ci.minneapolis.mn.us or mail to the address shown on the Charter Commission website. Please note that all submissions to the Coordinator or Commissioners are considered public data.