



Legislation Text

File #: RES PH 20-223, **Version:** 1

Providing standards for redistricting of wards in 2021.

WHEREAS, the Charter Commission is authorized by section 4.01.2 of the City Charter to revise ward boundaries following the decennial census, and

WHEREAS, the legal objective of redistricting is to create wards of substantially equal population comprised of contiguous territory, and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Supreme Court has defined traditional districting principles to be used for the process of redistricting, and

WHEREAS, Minnesota courts have articulated principles used for redistricting in this state, and

WHEREAS, it is in the public interest for the redistricting process in the City to be conducted in a manner that is open, transparent, nonpartisan and fair to both voters and candidates, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Council of the City of Saint Paul hereby approves the following standards to guide the Charter Commission during the process of redistricting of wards following the 2020 Census.

1. Census data. The population counts to be used for redistricting purposes will be determined from the block population data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau under Public Law 94-171, subject to correction by the Census Bureau or by the state demographer.
2. Traditional districting principles. City redistricting activities should be conducted using the traditional districting principles articulated by the U.S. Supreme Court and Minnesota courts, as augmented by the principles provided in these standards.
3. Standards for wards. The following standards apply to the creation of ward boundaries. The standards should be applied in the order they are listed.
 - a. Population equality. The population of each ward should be as equal as practicable and in any case must not deviate from the ideal population by more than one percent, plus or minus. The ideal population is defined to be the most recent city census population, divided by the total number of wards provided in the charter.
 - b. Compactness. The territory of each ward should be geographically compact. Compactness may be evaluated using one or more of the statistical methods used for legislative redistricting in Minnesota. A circle, square or hexagon may be used as a model for evaluating compactness of wards.
 - c. Contiguity. Wards should be composed of contiguous territory that allows for easy travel throughout the ward. Contiguity by water is sufficient if travel within the ward using bridges with public roadways and pedestrian access is possible. Wards with territory that connect at only a single point are not contiguous.

- d. Recognizable physical features. Ward boundaries should follow clearly recognizable physical features that are easily identifiable by the voters, including but not limited to freeways, arterial or commercial streets, railroad tracks, and bodies of water.
 - e. Communities of interest. The location of ward boundaries should attempt to preserve neighborhoods where they exist; recognize new and emerging neighborhoods resulting from development, population growth or demographic changes; and encompass other significant communities of interest in the city, including voters sharing similar social, economic and cultural affinities or characteristics, where it is practicable to do so. Downtown does not necessarily need to be considered one neighborhood.
 - f. Promote civic participation. Where it is practicable to do so, ward boundaries should be designed in a manner that encourages civic participation and fosters civic identity, including voting, participation in public school activities and engagement in other civic activities that unite the community.
4. The creation of ward boundaries should not be used to favor one candidate, political party or political philosophy over any other. The following standards should be used to ensure that political favoritism is not used in city redistricting.
- a. Existing ward boundaries. Ward boundaries should be created *de novo*. No standing should be given to the location of the existing ward boundaries in the determination of new ward boundaries.
 - b. Incumbents. The residence of incumbent members of the city council should not be used in any way to determine the location of new ward boundaries. Ward boundaries should not be used to help elect or defeat an incumbent council member.
 - c. Racial or ethnic characteristics. Ward boundaries must be designed in compliance with the provisions of the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments to the U.S. Constitution and the Voting Rights Act, but census data should not be used to deliberately concentrate or divide voters along racial, ethnic or language lines.
 - d. Use of partisan data. Data for partisan political purposes should not be used in any way in the creation of ward boundaries, including results of previous elections, party affiliation data or related social-economic data from the Census Bureau or other sources.
5. Numbering. Each ward should be assigned a consecutive number, beginning with the number “1” and continuing until the total number of wards provided in the charter is reached. The numbering sequence should generally follow the same geographic pattern used in the 2012 ward plan.
6. Public review. Proposed ward boundaries should be made available for public review and comment prior to adoption. Maps of the proposed ward boundaries should be posted on the city clerk’s web page.
7. Effective date. The new ward boundaries should be used for the first regularly scheduled election of the city council following the completion of redistricting.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City Clerk is hereby instructed to provide a copy of this Resolution to the members of the Charter Commission and to the Ramsey County Elections Office.

