



Department Source: Community Development - Planning

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: October 18, 2021

Re: Ward Reapportionment/Redistricting

## Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of the impact of the 2020 census on the city's wards; the ward reapportionment/redistricting process; and two *hypothetical* changes to the ward map: One that makes the ward populations virtually equal in population as possible (Trial A), and another that minimizes the number of shifts of population from one ward to another to achieve the goal of near-equality of population size (Trial B).

## Discussion

### Introduction

At the October 4, 2021 City Council meeting, the Council requested a report on the 2020 Census as it affects the city's wards. Upon the release of the 2020 Census data, we learned that the populations of the six wards grew such that there is a difference of 3,009 between the ward with the largest population (Fifth Ward) and the ward with the smallest population (Fourth Ward). This disparity marks a total deviation of 14.3 percent from the ideal condition of all wards equal in population. As discussed in the attached article *Redistricting in 2021: A Brief Overview for Local Government Officials*, a deviation of 10 percent between largest and smallest districts is thought to be the maximum defensible deviation within a "one person, one vote" standard. Therefore, the City of Columbia is best advised to make changes to its ward map, with a goal of achieving near equality of population size in each ward.

### Process

The City Charter provides the following language on city wards:

#### **Article 1, Section 4. Wards.**

*The city shall be divided into (6) wards, the boundaries of which shall be established by ordinance. Wards shall comprise compact and contiguous territory and contain, as nearly as possible, an equal number of inhabitants. Ward boundaries shall be reviewed and revised from time to time, as may be necessary to maintain as nearly as possible an equal number of inhabitants in each ward.*

(3-7-72)

There is no requirement that a committee be formed. Council has that option. In 2011, City Council appointed a committee of eight members, two at-large and one for each ward, to revise the ward map. That committee worked with City staff and produced five options,



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referred to as trials, for public and Council consideration. It should be noted that the population deviation from the ideal ward size at the outset of the 2011 process was greater than now – 43.2 percent in contrast to the 14.3 percent reported above for the 2020 census counts.

There is no firm deadline for adjustment of ward boundaries following the release of the census data, only the statement that boundaries shall be reviewed from time to time. Cities are advised, however, to adjust their maps in a timely fashion if a significant population disparity has been identified, to remain consistent with the one person, one vote principle.

Chapter 8 of the City Code (Elections) delineates the existing wards and will be amended by ordinance to establish a new ward map.

## Census Data

As the City Council is aware, the release of the 2020 decennial census data was significantly delayed, with the Public Law 94-171 data release only becoming available in August 16, 2021 instead of its typical release by April. Only on September 30, 2021 did the Census Bureau released the data in a more accessible format. In contrast, the 2011 City process of redrafting the ward map was *completed* on October 17, 2011.

A complication of the late release of census data has been the onset of the opening of petitions for April election which will occur in October, 2021.

## Draft Trial Maps

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) staff has prepared two maps to demonstrate two possible approaches to redrafting of the ward map. These two maps are a starting point for conversation about the reapportionment/redistricting. The primary difference in the two maps is the handling of the exchanges among the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Wards. The exchange from the First Ward to the Second Ward is the same for both maps. The Third Ward, which is only a difference of 10 from the average ward population, has been left unchanged.

The first map, "Trial A," has a difference of 441 persons, per the 2020 census, between the largest and smallest wards, a deviation of 2.0 percent. The ward boundaries resulting from the exchange of a portion of Fifth Ward into Fourth Ward and a portion of Sixth Ward into Fifth Ward are a bit uneven compared to the existing ward map, which follows some structural boundaries such as Broadway, I-70, Oakland Gravel Road, the MKT Trail, and Providence Road for considerable lengths.

An area west of Stadium, north of Worley (and also south of Worley west of Fairview Road) currently in First Ward, is shifted to Second Ward. An area of the north-central portion of Fifth Ward is shifted to the Fourth Ward. An area along Providence Road beginning at the southeast corner of Providence and Stadium, is shifted from Sixth Ward to Fifth Ward.



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The second map, "Trial B," has a difference between the largest and smallest wards of 436 persons, again a deviation of 2.0 percent. Two geographic areas of the city are affected: An area west of Stadium, north of Worley (and also south of Worley west of Fairview Road) currently in First Ward, is shifted to Second Ward (same as in Trial A); and an area including Grasslands in Fifth Ward and portions of Fifth Ward and Sixth Ward south of Stadium Boulevard from the MKT Trail to Old 63 are shifted to Fourth Ward.

There are other factors besides population counts that the Council may take into account when redrawing ward boundaries, such as compact and contiguous shape, and the impact of ward boundaries on neighborhood associations.

The census block is the smallest geographic unit of population data, so all proposed ward boundary changes shift whole census blocks from one ward to another. The curvature of some block boundaries as well as the sparse population within particular blocks explains some of the irregular shapes and lines in the trial maps.

## Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: None. This activity can be supported within the City budget

Long-Term Impact: Enter the cost of proposed legislation to the city for years **beyond two**.

## Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

### Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Inclusive Community, Secondary Impact: Secondary, Tertiary Impact: Tertiary

### Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Inter-Governmental Cooperation, Secondary Impact: Secondary, Tertiary Impact: Tertiary

## Legislative History

Date	Action
October 17, 2011	Ordinance 21126 Amending Chapter 8 of the City Code to establish new ward boundaries (Trial E)

## Suggested Council Action

This information is presented for Council's information and discussion.