

Redistricting the City Council Districts

City of Bonita Springs

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Redistricting?

- Council districts are required to be as nearly equal in population as practicable or possible. Redistricting is the process by which differences in the population of Council districts are equalized by adjusting district boundaries, and furthers the principal of “one person, one vote” and the provisions of the Voting Rights Act.

Who performs Redistricting?

- The legislative body of the jurisdiction (county commission, school board, city council, etc.) makes adjustments to the boundaries of its districts. Some city or county charters may provide for an advisory board or committee to make recommendations for the consideration of the commission or council.

Why is the City Council Redistricting?

- The City Charter provides that the City Council may redivide the City into six districts as roughly equal in permanent population as practical after the decennial census.
- The US Bureau of the Census surveys the population of the country every ten years. The 2020 census data was tabulated and released in late 2021.

What are some Common Criteria used when Redistricting?

There are a number of criteria commonly used in the redistricting process and the City Council has adopted a Resolution concerning criteria in the redistricting process. Criteria are considered in total and balanced with each other. However, the dominant criterion is population.

- Equal (almost) in population. Individual districts should be as nearly equal in population as is possible or practicable. “Population” means residents, not registered voters. “Nearly equal” means that the population of individual districts should be as close to the average size as is possible.
- Don’t dilute minority voting strength. If there is a location where a significant number of minority residents reside, their ability to vote as a block should not be diluted by either dividing that population into two or more districts (termed “cracking”) or, if there is a significant minority population in two districts, moving that population into a single district (termed “packing”).
- Use census blocks. Data from the US Bureau of the Census is updated every 10 years by surveying the population of the United States. The smallest unit within which that information is available is “blocks.”
- Compact and contiguous. Districts should be relatively compact and contiguous. Unusual, “bizarre” or serpentine district shapes that are created without furthering a valid underlying public policy purpose must be avoided.
- Significant natural and man-made boundaries. Where possible, district boundaries should follow easily recognized or understood boundaries, like major roads, waterbodies or parklands.
- Recognize existing district boundaries. The boundaries of the new districts may seek to retain their existing boundaries to the extent possible.
- Avoid splitting communities of interest. District boundaries should seek to avoid splitting communities that have similar interests (e.g. neighborhoods) where possible.

Do the 2010 amendments to the Florida Constitution concerning redistricting apply to the City of Bonita Springs?

- No. The addition of Section 20 (standards for establishing congressional district boundaries) and 21 (standards for establishing legislative district boundaries) to Article III of the Florida Constitution applied to the standards used by the Florida Legislature when redistricting Florida’s Congressional districts and those of the Legislature itself.