



Department of Planning & Community & Economic Development

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To: Mayor Rhodes-Conway, Madison Common Council

From: Redistricting Staff Team, in collaboration with Department of Civil Rights Staff

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Subject: Equity in Redistricting

As the City Council considers the ward and alder districts recommended by the Ad Hoc Redistricting Committee, it is important to note the equity considerations that went in to Committee deliberations and development of the various redistricting concepts. The Alders who served on the Redistricting Committee (Alders Lemmer, Wehelie, Martin, and Myadze) will also be able to provide their perspective on this topic at the Council meeting.

Federal and State Requirements

The foundation of redistricting is ensuring Federal and State redistricting requirements are met. These requirements were included in the Redistricting Committee's written criteria and reviewed at the beginning of Committee meetings. The Committee's written criteria were used to draw new alder districts, and where applicable, establish new wards:

1. **Have equal population.** The Committee directed staff to integrate the Town of Madison population that will be absorbed in 2022 into calculations, which resulted in a target district population of 13,739. A +/-5% factor was adopted to generate a target range of 13,052-14,426.
2. **Enhance the participation of communities of color and communities that primarily use a language other than English.** All concepts that were developed for Committee review and discussion included a [race and ethnicity map](#), a [language spoken map](#), and a [demographic table](#) (links are to Concept 7a maps; information from other concepts is available on the [redistricting committee materials web page](#)). This background information helped facilitate Committee discussion of this criteria.
3. **Be compact.**
4. **Be contiguous.**
5. **Account for Communities of Interest (COI).** The Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau (LRB) states that "[r]especting communities of interest in a redistricting plan means attempting to group like-minded or similar people so that they may elect a representative of their choice who reflects their common values in a manner relevant to legislative representation." The Committee adopted the following COIs (linked maps are from Concept #7a):
 - a. [Neighborhoods and neighborhood associations.](#)
 - b. [Elementary school attendance areas.](#)
 - c. [College students.](#)
 - d. Housing tenure/transience (owner/renter).
 - e. [Income distribution.](#)

In addition, the Committee adopted two criteria that are not State or Federal requirements: use major roads and other physical barriers as alder district boundaries; and ensure various alder districts are exposed to future population growth. While not officially designated as a one of the written criteria, the Committee often highlighted they would not take into account where current Alders reside as a basis for drawing new alder districts.

All criteria are a balancing act – for example, the compactness criteria (#3) should not be set aside to meet the communities of color criteria (#2).

The primary equity criteria from the above list are #2 and #5. Regarding criteria #2, the decennial census does not collect information on language spoken, so staff relied on the Census Bureau's American Community Survey, which provides data at larger geographies. Concept #7a successfully keeps most concentrations of these populations together, while balancing other criteria.

The other component of criteria #2 is enhancing the participation of communities of color, which is done by creating districts that have higher percentages of people of color where reasonably possible. The percentage of the City's population that is nonwhite and Hispanic white increased by 6.9% since the 2010 Census (from 24.3% to 31.2% of the total population). Note that the Census questions concerning race and ethnicity were [not exactly the same between 2010 and 2020](#). In general, the 2020 question concerning race allowed for more flexibility in responses, which may have led to more people replying with more detail. There were also technical changes in the way the Census Bureau processed information that allowed for more detailed responses to be more accurately represented.

Under the four most recent concepts reviewed by the Redistricting Committee (#5b, #7a, #7b, and #7c), the percentage of people of color went up in 18 or 19 of the 20 alder districts. After the 2010 Census, there was only one district (14) that had over 35% people of color. Concept #7a has six districts over 35%, with District 14 at 59% and District 20 at 44%. While Concept #5b created more districts with 40+% people of color, it also split more neighborhoods, which was considered an important COI in the Committee's deliberations.

The Committee continued to keep the redistricting criteria, and in particular the equity-related criteria, at the center of deliberations during the process. For example, the Committee directed staff to prepare a concept (#7c) that kept the Arbor Hills neighborhood and adjacent Leopold neighborhood within District 14. However, in reviewing the data and hearing public testimony related to Concept #7c, the Committee felt that #7a remained the preferred concept, as it had more districts with 35+% people of color and did not split the Burr Oaks neighborhood between alder districts.

Compressed Timeline

COVID delayed the release of 2020 Census data which created uncertainty regarding local redistricting deadlines included in State Statute. Dane County, and the cities, villages and towns in Dane County, are following a compressed redistricting timeline to establish new wards and voting districts in time for the 2022 Spring Election.

Staff began compiling background data and information and publicizing redistricting prior to the 2020 Census data release on August 12th, including encouraging residents to submit comments on what they see as COIs. However, interest in the community did not pick up until initial redistricting concepts were released in mid-September. Unfortunately, the shortened timeline allowed for less engagement with the community around draft redistricting concepts than took place in 2011. Still, in addition to making the two main concepts available for review on the Redistricting web page (along with background

information and maps for both concepts), staff also distributed hard copies of maps and comment sheets to all libraries. Redistricting staff worked with library staff to publicize the availability of redistricting information at libraries. “Office hours” were held by redistricting staff at select libraries around the City to answer questions from residents. Redistricting information was translated to both Spanish and Mandarin. There was some diversity amongst library attendees that attended the “office hours” portion. Staff also held two virtual meetings to present the redistricting concepts and answer questions. Publicity for those two meetings did not state that interpretation would be available on request. Staff did not survey virtual meeting attendees on race, ethnicity, or other demographic information. Staff published a press release and worked with the Mayor’s Office to have the Mayor publish a redistricting blog entry. Finally, nine Redistricting Committee meetings were held throughout the process. While some public testimony was given during these meetings, no requests for interpretation/ translation were received for those meetings.

Starting Redistricting Committee meetings a bit earlier in the summer may have allowed the Committee to familiarize themselves with background information and potentially allow for more time to build awareness of the process in the community. However, it may not have changed the outcome, as the Redistricting Committee weighed community feedback, guided the development of numerous concepts that illustrated different options, and unanimously recommended Concept 7a to the Common Council.

Other Cities

In reviewing select other cities’ redistricting web pages ([Milwaukee](#), [Green Bay](#), [Minneapolis](#), [Seattle](#), [Austin](#)), the City of Madison has a robust set of [background data, information, and public feedback](#) that went in to development of redistricting concepts that were discussed by the Committee. Some other cities, like Minneapolis, have more time with their process (meetings are scheduled through March 2022), and have some well-produced videos in multiple languages that accompany their information. With more time, the City of Madison would have done more outreach and engagement, as was done for the City’s 2020 Census Complete Count initiative.