



LOCAL REDISTRICTING FAQS

What is redistricting and why do we redistrict?

Redistricting is the process where the district lines for political units are redrawn to account for population shifts. Federal and state constitutional and statutory provisions mandate redistricting.¹

Who is responsible for local redistricting?

Local redistricting requires the cooperation and coordination among counties and their respective municipalities. Each county board is responsible for adjusting supervisory district lines. The governing body of a municipality—the common council or village or town board—is responsible for establishing ward boundaries. The common council of every city redistricts its aldermanic districts.

What is the basic procedure and timeline for local redistricting?

Wisconsin has a three-step procedure for local redistricting. The process starts at the county level, moves to the municipal level, and concludes with counties' adoption of final supervisory districts and municipalities' adoption of aldermanic districts. Each of the three steps is comprised of a 60-day work period and each step must be completed before the next step can begin.

After the results of the federal census become available, counties have up to 60 days to enact a tentative supervisory district plan, but “no later than July 1 following the year of each decennial census” (i.e. July 1, 2021);² municipalities are allotted up to the following 60 days to enact an ordinance or resolution that establishes municipal wards;³ lastly, counties are given 60 days to adopt final supervisory district plans, and cities must establish aldermanic districts within 60 days of adjusting its ward boundaries.⁴

What are the rules for drawing county lines?

County supervisory districts must divide the county into a number of districts equal to the number of supervisors, and all districts must be “substantially equal” in population. Territory within each district must be contiguous, and whenever possible, a county must place whole contiguous municipalities or contiguous parts of the same municipality (wards) within the same district.⁵ Additionally, census blocks may not be divided unless the block is bisected by a municipal

¹ [U.S. Const. art. 1, § 2, cl. 3](#); [U.S. Const. amend. XIV, § 2](#); [2 U.S.C. § 2a](#); [Wis. Const. art. IV, § 3](#); [Wis. Stat. §§ 59.10 \(3\)](#); [5.15](#); [62.08](#).

² [Wis. Stat. § 59.10 \(2\) \(a\) and \(3\) \(b\) 1.](#)

³ [Wis. Stat. § 5.15 \(2\) \(b\).](#)

⁴ [Wis. Stat. § 59.10 \(3\) \(b\) 2.](#)

⁵ If the board seeks to divide a municipality, the board is required to provide a written statement to the affected municipality with the tentative plan that specifies the approximate location of the territory from which a ward is to be created and the approximate population of the ward. [Wis. Stat. § 59.10 \(3\) \(b\) 1.](#)

boundary or unless a division is required to enable creation of supervisory districts that are substantially equal in population.⁶

Counties with a population of at least 750,000 follow requirements outlined under [Wis. Stat. § 59.10 \(2\) \(a\)](#) and [\(d\)](#). Counties with a population of less than 750,000 and more than one town follow requirements under [Wis. Stat. § 59.10 \(3\) \(a\)](#) to [\(c\)](#). Counties with a population of less than 750,000 and more than one town are classified and entitled to a maximum number of supervisors based on population totals.⁷ Counties with a population of:

- Less than 750,000 but at least 100,000 shall have no more than 47 supervisors.
- Less than 100,000 but at least 50,000 shall have no more than 39 supervisors.
- Less than 50,000 but at least 25,000 shall have no more than 31 supervisors.
- Less than 25,000 and containing more than one town shall have no more than 21 supervisors.

Does my municipality have to participate in the redistricting process?

State law requires a city, village, or town with a population of 1,000 or more to divide itself into wards.⁸

What are the rules for drawing ward boundaries?

Every city, village, and town in Wisconsin is required to be divided into wards, whose boundaries and assigned number are intended to be as permanent as possible.⁹ Where possible and practicable, each ward is to consist of whole census blocks; be kept compact; observe the community of interest of existing neighborhoods and other settlements; be confined to a single municipality; and be only in one county supervisory board district.¹⁰ While wards do not have to be equal in population, wards are subject to population limits based on the size of the municipality.¹¹

- In any city in which the population is at least 150,000, each ward shall contain not less than 1,000 nor more than 4,000 inhabitants.
- In any city in which the population is at least 39,000 but less than 150,000, each ward shall contain not less than 800 nor more than 3,200 inhabitants.
- In any city, village, or town in which the population is at least 10,000 but less than 39,000, each ward shall contain not less than 600 nor more than 2,100 inhabitants.
- In any city, village, or town in which the population is less than 10,000, each ward shall contain not less than 300 nor more than 1,000 inhabitants.

What if I still have questions about the local redistricting process?

If you have questions about the local redistricting process, please contact Joseph T. Kreye by email at Joseph.Kreye@legis.wisconsin.gov or by phone at (608) 504-5857.

⁶ [Wis. Stat. § 59.10 \(2\) \(a\)](#) and [\(3\) \(b\) 1.](#)

⁷ [Wis. Stat. § 59.10 \(3\) \(a\)](#). Note that if the population of any county is within 2 percent of the minimum population for the next most populous grouping, the board may employ the maximum number for such districts set for such next most populous grouping pursuant to [Wis. Stat. § 59.10 \(3\) \(a\) 5.](#)

⁸ [Wis. Stat. § 5.15 \(2\) \(a\)](#). A “ward” means a town, village, or city subdivision created to facilitate election administration and establish election districts.

⁹ [Wis. Stat. § 5.15 \(1\) \(a\) 1.](#)

¹⁰ [Wis. Stat. § 5.15.](#)

¹¹ [Wis. Stat. § 5.15 \(2\) \(b\)](#). Note there are exceptions.