

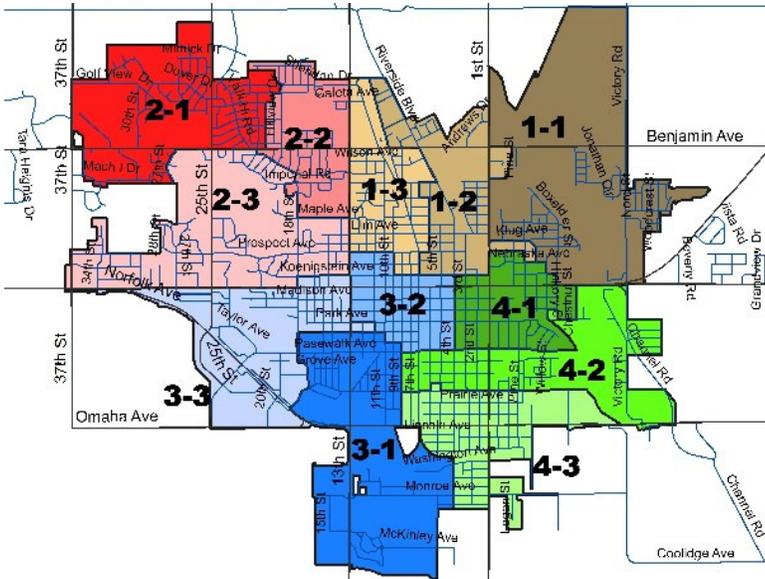
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“Census Redistricting” by Beth Deck



The U.S. Constitution requires a census every 10 years with the primary purpose being to determine how many seats each state will have in the U.S. House of Representatives. However, state and local governments also rely on the census numbers for redistricting (redrawing of political districts/wards).

Once the 2010 federal census numbers are released, cities that elect city council members by ward or district need to begin the process of redistricting to ensure that the wards are substantially equal in population. It is the responsibility of the governing bodies in Nebraska to redraw district lines to bring the wards into compliance with the law. Nebraska Revised Statutes Section 32-553 requires that

“[w]hen any political subdivision . . . nominates or elects members of the governing board by districts, such district shall be substantially equal in population as determined by the most recent federal decennial census.” Therefore, the Norfolk City Council is required to redraw district lines after each federal decennial census to maintain substantial population equality in each of the four wards.

Section 32-553 also requires that, “Any such political subdivision . . . shall, if necessary to maintain substantial population equality as required by this subsection, have new district boundaries drawn within six months after the passage and approval of the legislative bill providing for reestablishing legislative districts.”

As an example, the 2000 “substantially equal in population” standards for Norfolk are below:

- * Norfolk 2000 population -- 23,516
- * Number of City wards -- 4
- * Ideal Population per Ward -- $23,516 / 4 = 5,879$

What does this mean to Norfolk residents? The district (ward) boundaries “shall, as nearly as possible, follow the precinct lines created by the election commissioner or county clerk after each federal decennial census.” The actual adjusted ward boundary lines per census population, approved by the City Council on August 20, 2001 by Ordinance 4547, are as follows:

	<u>2000 Census Population according to old (1999 census) boundary lines</u>	<u>2000 Adjusted Census Population</u>
Ward 1	6,346	5,872
Ward 2	6,127	5,878
Ward 3	5,429	5,886
Ward 4	5,614	5,880

The same process previously used to redistrict (redraw) ward and precinct boundaries in the City of Norfolk will be used following completion of the 2010 census. After completion of the redistricting, the Norfolk City Council is required to provide written notification of the change in the boundaries of the wards and precincts to the election commission or the county clerk.