

# Multnomah County Commission Redistricting Plan

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Multnomah County Auditor's Office  
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### Home Rule Charter Mandates (Why We Did This)

The Multnomah County Home Rule Charter Section 3.15 directs the Auditor to use decennial (recurring every 10 years) census data to determine if the population of any commissioner district is more than 103% of the population of any other commissioner district. If one is, the Charter directs the Auditor, in consultation with the Multnomah County Elections Division, to prepare and present a plan for modifying the commissioner district boundaries to the Board of County Commissioners by August 1 of that year. The Charter allows the Board 45 days to pass an ordinance to change the boundaries of the commissioner districts.

The U.S. Census Bureau did not make redistricting data from the 2020 census available until August 12, 2021 making compliance with the Charter’s requirement to meet the August 1 deadline impossible. The Auditor notified the Board of County Commissioners that development of a redistricting plan would be delayed due to the late release of the census data, but would be completed no later than the end of February 2022.

### Population growth in districts 1 and 2 trigger need for redistricting

Population changes triggered a need for redistricting based on our calculations of the relative sizes of each commissioner district. The table below displays populations of the existing districts – both districts 1 and 2 are more than 103% of the smallest district by population.

#### Current District Populations Compared to 103% Charter Requirement

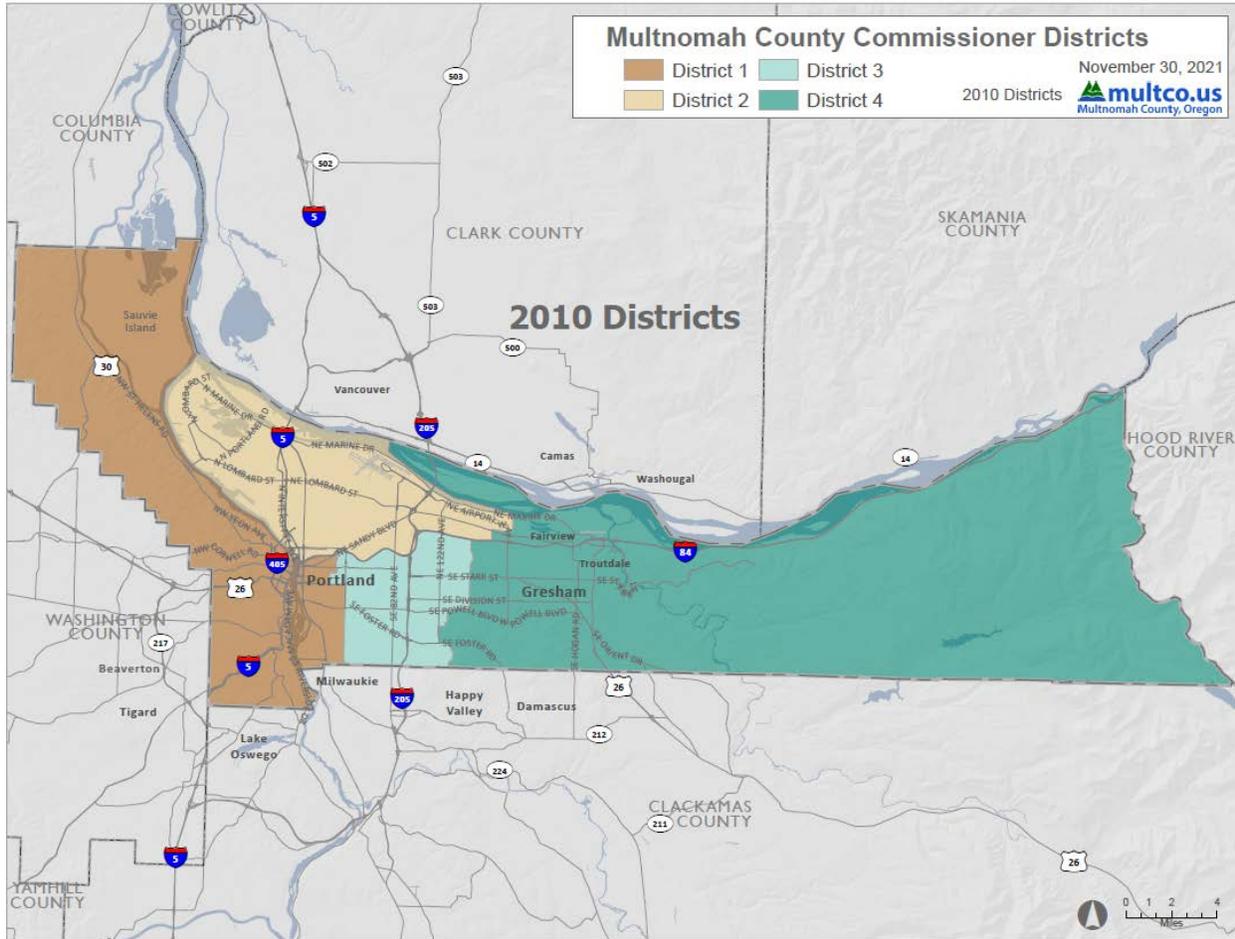
District	2020 Population using 2010 District Boundaries	Percent of Smallest District
1 – West	215,021	108.8%
2 – North	203,577	103.0%
3 – South	197,603	100.0%
4 – East	199,227	100.8%

Source: Multnomah County Auditor’s Office and Multnomah County GIS based on U.S. census data

### Proposed Redistricting Plan

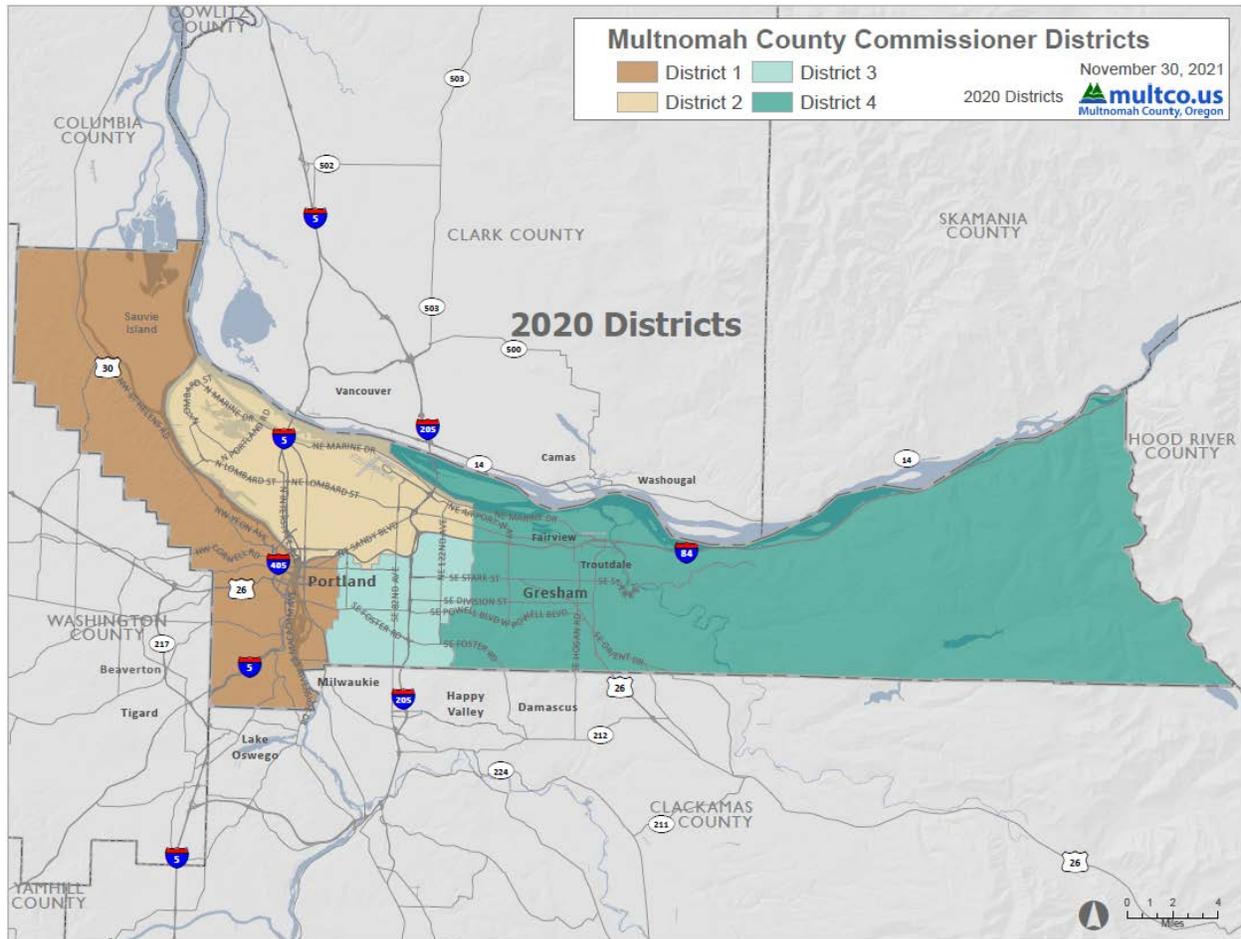
The maps below display the existing and proposed commissioner districts. We recommend that the Board of County Commissioners adopt the proposed boundaries described in Appendix 1 via ordinance.

### Current Commissioner Districts



Source: Multnomah County GIS

Proposed Commissioner Districts



Source: Multnomah County GIS

We developed these boundaries according to the County Charter and other legal criteria

The Multnomah County Home Rule Charter specifies that the Auditor shall be guided by the following points in drawing up a plan to adjust the commissioner districts:

- No district will be more than 102% of the population of any other commissioner district; and
- The general geographic characteristics of districts established by the Charter shall be retained as nearly as possible.

The U.S. Voting Rights Act prohibits the intentional dilution of the voting strength of any race or language minority group. It requires that the redrawing of district lines not lessen these voters opportunity to participate in the political process.

The Oregon Secretary of State issued a directive that local redistricting efforts include the following criteria where practicable:

- Districts should be contiguous;
- Districts should be of equal population;
- Districts should utilize existing geographic or political boundaries whenever possible;
- Districts should not divide communities of common interest;
- Districts should be connected by transportation links;
- Districts should not be drawn for the purpose of favoring any political party, incumbent legislator, or any other person; and
- Districts should not be drawn for the purpose of diluting the voting strength of any language or ethnic minority group.

### The proposed districts meet County, State, and Federal Criteria

Our proposed districts meet the various requirements set forth in the Charter, the Oregon Secretary of State’s directive, and the U.S. Voting Rights Act. The proposed boundaries bring the difference in the population of each district well below the 2% threshold.

The largest of the proposed districts is less than 1% larger than the smallest proposed district

<b>District</b>	<b>Proposed 2020 District Populations</b>	<b>Percent of Smallest District</b>
1 – West	203,258	100.0%
2 – North	203,617	100.2%
3 – South	204,946	100.8%
4 – East	203,607	100.2%

Source: Multnomah County Auditor’s Office and Multnomah County GIS based on U.S. census data

Population growth in Districts 1 and 2 meant that we needed to increase the size of Districts 3 and 4, while still maintaining the geographic characteristics of the existing districts. This generally shifted district borders west. Most of the previous boundaries are intact.

In alignment with generally accepted government auditing standards, the Auditor’s Office seeks to ensure that government operates equitably, and we focused on redistricting criteria related to racial equity within Multnomah County. The primary criteria we are required to follow related to equity came from the U.S. Voting Rights Act and the Oregon Secretary of State’s directives described earlier.

We used census data on race and ethnicity to compare the demographic makeup of the current and proposed commissioner districts. Changes to the way the census approached race and

ethnicity mean that comparing the districts using 2010 and 2020 data wouldn't be an appropriate comparison. For example, individuals who reported being a single race in 2010 may have reported being two or more races in 2020 because of changes in the way the questions were asked. As a result, we applied the 2020 demographic data to both the existing commissioner districts and the proposed districts. The table below shows the comparison.

Relatively slight changes in commission district borders resulted in very little change in demographics

Race/Ethnicity (in percent)	District 1		District 2		District 3		District 4	
	Existing	Proposed	Existing	Proposed	Existing	Proposed	Existing	Proposed
White	77.4	77.3	67.2	67.8	64.8	65.5	62.8	62.4
Black/African American	2.6	2.7	9.0	8.8	5.5	5.3	5.2	5.5
Native American or Alaskan	0.8	0.8	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.6	1.6
Asian/Asian- American	6.3	6.2	5.2	5.0	11.5	11.4	7.7	7.9
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.2	0.2	0.7	0.6	0.8	0.7	1.1	1.1
Other Race	2.4	2.4	5.5	5.4	5.6	5.4	10.4	10.4
Multi-Racial	10.3	10.4	11.1	11.2	10.7	10.7	11.3	11.2
Hispanic or Latino (Any Race)	7.4	7.5	12.2	12.1	12.3	12.0	19.4	19.3

Source: Multnomah County Auditor's Office and Multnomah County GIS based on U.S. census data. We recognize that peoples' race/ethnic identities can be more dynamic than the categories used here, but we are limited to using U.S. census categories.

As described later in this report, we solicited community input for our redistricting process. Some people who provided input identified their community as being their neighborhood, and others said their community was their school or school district. These communities of common interest sometimes conflict with the requirement to utilize existing geographic or political boundaries, such as state legislative districts. We were still able to keep most neighborhoods

together within districts, but as they are just one proxy for communities of common interest, we prioritized other criteria like equity and geographic and political boundaries ahead of others.

### We informed the public and solicited community members' input

In August, we started work to inform the community about redistricting. We provided information about redistricting in our monthly newsletter and through social media. We also conducted outreach via email and in person to a wide range of community groups, including culturally specific groups serving Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities. The Board of County Commissioners, Office of Community Involvement, and County Communications also helped get redistricting messages out to communities.

On October 15, our office ended a month's long process where people could share comments about existing boundaries we should try not to impact and communities we should try not to divide. We provided feedback forms online in English, Russian, Somali, Simplified Chinese, Spanish, and Vietnamese. With the cooperation of the Library District and their branch staff, we had hard copies of these forms at all library branches. We received 48 feedback forms. The majority of comments we received were about keeping areas together, such as keeping a neighborhood fully in one district, and keeping east county cities in one district.

Also in October, we launched another way for people to weigh in on commissioner district boundaries. People had through November 19 to comment on the proposed boundaries. People could view an interactive map, static maps comparing current district boundaries with proposed, and text descriptions that compare the current and proposed boundaries. For both public input opportunities, people could also provide comment by video or audio recording your answers and emailing them to our office. We received a variety of comments, looked for common themes in the comments, and incorporated them when they did not conflict with Charter requirements.

### Redistricting methodology

In preparing our redistricting plan, we analyzed existing boundaries, considered alternative boundaries, and assessed them according to the criteria presented above. We consulted with the Multnomah County Elections Division, reached out to community members and groups, solicited input via the County Auditor website, utilized data made available to us by the U.S. Census Bureau, and relied on the mapping resources of the Multnomah County GIS program and technical assistance from the County Attorney.

We solicited community input for our redistricting process, as described in the section above. We did not hold public hearings or meetings due to the pandemic, but we did attend several

community events in person. We posted a draft redistricting plan on the Auditor's Office web site and solicited comments. *See Appendix 2 for a guide to public engagement for redistricting.*

The basic tenet that districts should be close to equal population combined with the County Charter's requirement that new districts should retain the general geographic characteristics of the previous districts dictated the approach we used to redraw the lines. We then looked to use readily identifiable roads to make identification and description of boundaries as simple as possible. We worked with the County Elections Division to incorporate new political districts into the boundaries and to facilitate the drawing of new precinct boundaries. Finally, we did not divide any U.S. census blocks – doing so would have required us to estimate the population of each fraction of a block.

We also paid attention to other jurisdictional boundaries, such as school districts and neighborhoods, in an attempt to maintain continuity of communities of interest. However, because districts must be approximately equal in population and must also retain their general geographic characteristics we could not follow all of these boundaries.

This special project is required by Charter mandate and was included in our 2021 audit schedule. While it is not an audit, we generally followed government auditing standards, including conducting our internal quality control process, in doing this work.

## Project staff

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## Appendix 1- Description of Proposed Boundaries between the Commission Districts

### Proposed boundary between districts 1 & 2

- The boundary between districts 1 and 2 follows the existing boundary, using Interstate 84 west of 33rd Avenue to the Steel Bridge and then following the Willamette River north until it reaches the Columbia River.
- The District 1 western and southern boundaries are the county lines.

### Proposed boundary between districts 1 & 3

- Follows 33rd Avenue south from Interstate 84; at Northeast Oregon Street 33rd Avenue transitions to become Northeast 32nd Avenue. Follows Northeast 32nd Avenue to Southeast Stark Street.
- Follows Southeast Stark Street east to Southeast 34th Avenue.
- Follows 34th Avenue south from Southeast Stark Street to Southeast Division Street.
- Follows Southeast Division Street to Southeast 33rd Avenue.
- Follows 33rd Avenue south from Southeast Division Street to State Highway 26.
- Follows State Highway 26 east to Southeast 34th Avenue.
- Follows Southeast 34th Avenue south from State Highway 26 to Southeast Holgate Boulevard.
- Follows Southeast Holgate Boulevard west to Southeast 30th Avenue.
- Follows Southeast 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue from Southeast Holgate Boulevard to Southeast Steele Street.
- Follows Southeast Steele Street west to Southeast 26th Avenue.
- Follows Southeast 26th Avenue from Southeast Steele Street to Southeast Reedway Street.
- Follows Southeast Reedway Street west to BNSF railroad tracks.
- Follows the BNSF railroad tracks to Southeast Sherrett Street.
- Follows the existing boundary west on Southeast Sherrett Street to Southeast 23rd Avenue then south to Southeast Ochoco Street and then west to the Willamette River.

### Proposed boundary between districts 2 & 3

- The District 2 northern boundary is the Columbia River.
- Follows Interstate 84 east from Northeast 33rd Avenue to Northeast 44th Avenue.
- Follows Northeast 44th Avenue south from Interstate 84 to Northeast Glisan Street.
- Follows Northeast Glisan Street east from Northeast 44th Avenue to Northeast 52nd Avenue.
- Follows Northeast 52nd Avenue south from Northeast Glisan to East Burnside Street.

- Follows East Burnside Street east from Northeast 52nd Avenue to Northeast 61st Avenue.
- Follows Northeast 61st Avenue north from East Burnside Street to Northeast Glisan Street.
- Follows Northeast Glisan east from Northeast 61st Avenue to Northeast 67th Avenue.
- Follows Northeast 67th Avenue; at around Northeast Hassalo Street, Northeast 67th Ave becomes Northeast 68th Avenue, follows Northeast 68th Avenue north to Interstate 84 Northeast Halsey Street Exit ramp.
- Follows the Northeast Halsey Street Exit ramp east to Northeast 69th Avenue.
- Follows Northeast 69th Avenue south from the Northeast Halsey Street Exit ramp to Northeast Clackamas Street.
- Follows Northeast Clackamas Street east from Northeast 69th Avenue to Northeast 82nd Avenue.
- Follows Northeast 82nd Avenue north from Northeast Clackamas Street to Interstate 84.
- Follows Interstate 84 east from Northeast 82nd Avenue to Northeast 148th Avenue.

#### Proposed boundary between districts 2 & 4

- Follows Northeast 148th Street from Interstate 84 to the Columbia River.

#### Proposed boundary between districts 3 & 4

- The boundary is essentially unchanged following 148th Street from Interstate 84 to State Highway 26 and then west on State Highway 26 to Southeast 130th Avenue and then south on Southeast 130th Avenue to Southeast Holgate Boulevard.
- The proposed boundary then follows Southeast Holgate Boulevard west from Southeast 130th Street to Southeast 122nd Street.
- Follows Southeast 122nd Avenue south from Southeast Holgate Boulevard to Southeast Foster Road.
- Follows Southeast Foster Road to Southeast 131st Street.
- Follows Southeast 131st Street south to Southeast Claybourne Street.
- Follows Southeast Claybourne Street east to Southeast 134th Avenue which becomes Southeast Deardorff Road and follows Southeast Deardorff Road to the county line.
- The District 3 southern boundary is the county line.

#### Proposed boundaries for district 4

- The District 4 northern boundary is the Columbia River.
- The District 4 eastern boundary is the county line.
- The District 4 southern boundary is the county line.

## Appendix 2 – Community Engagement Guide

Redistricting can be a controversial process, which puts a premium on transparency and community input. Among other sources, we used the following questions developed by the Loyola (Los Angeles) Law School’s [All about Redistricting Project](#) as a guide in approaching public engagement. The pandemic and the County Charter significantly impacted our ability to address each question. The questions and our responses are shown below.

<b>Input</b>		<b>Notes</b>
Is the data used to draw the lines publicly available?	Yes	Data available from U.S. Census Bureau
Are there hearings before maps are first made public? Is input from these hearings incorporated into draft maps?	No	Pandemic made hearings impractical, but we conducted outreach via the web, social media and in public libraries and incorporated feedback into draft map.
Is there a mechanism to get feedback about problems after draft maps are produced?	Yes	The draft map was introduced in a County Commission meeting, with several feedback options.
Is the public invited to submit full or partial plans, or comment on drafts?	Yes	The public is welcome to provide feedback on draft map, including full or partial plans.
<b>Transparency</b>		
Do the decision makers meet in public to work through their redistricting decisions?	No	The pandemic made public meetings impractical. The public was invited to comment before and after they completed the draft map.
Is there any limit on private conversations about plans, particularly with incumbents?	No	Staff met with each current commissioner and the County Chair one time as a way to help connect outreach efforts with community groups.
Does the redistricting body attempt to explain why they drew the districts they did?	Yes	The full explanation of the proposed district boundaries will be included in the report to the County Commission.
<b>Composition</b>		
Will the people who draw the lines run for office in the districts they draw?	No	No one who worked on the proposed maps has filed to run for a Multnomah County Commissioner position.
Do the people who draw the lines reasonably reflect the diversity of the jurisdiction to account for different views on where the lines should be drawn?	No	Two people managed the project, overseen by the elected County Auditor. The team sought diversity of views with countywide outreach efforts.
Does the redistricting body have a reasonable partisan balance, or a voting rule designed to help create compromise?	Yes	The election of county commissioners is non-partisan.

<b>Results</b>		
Has a sizeable minority population been separated into small groups or packed into a single district?	No	Black, Indigenous, and People of Color populations in the proposed districts are essentially unchanged from the previous districts.
If communities and/or neighborhoods were cut apart or kept together, is there a sensible reason?	Yes	The team re-drew district boundaries according to criteria set out in the County Charter, state and federal law, and a directive from the Oregon Secretary of State.
Was a district carved around an incumbent or challenger's house? Was territory shifted in a way that makes it much more difficult for a candidate to win an election and if so, does that territory shift make sense for another reason?	No	We made only minor changes to the district boundaries and the changes were not made to accommodate anyone specifically. And, only one incumbent was eligible to run for re-election.
Given the past political preferences of voters within each district, do the districts that give a substantial advantage to one party or another reasonably reflect the overall political balance of the state?	N/A	Multnomah County Commission elections are non-partisan, so political parties do not play a role in this redistricting process.