

NYC Districting Commission 101

A primer

Revised August 5, 2022

Intro

- The U.S. Constitution requires a census of the population every ten years.
- This U.S. Census triggers the redistricting of federal, state and local legislative districts across the nation to reflect the Constitution's one-person, one-vote doctrine.

NYC Districting Commission

- In New York City, the City Charter assigns the task of drawing 51 new city council maps to the New York City Districting Commission.
- The commission has 15 members. Seven are appointed by the mayor. Eight are appointed by the city council. Five are appointed by the council majority and three by the council minority.
- The criteria for choosing commission members is borough, party, minority status and diversity.

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Why it Matters

- New York City's population grew from approximately 8.2 million people in 2010 to approximately 8.8 million in 2020.
- That's roughly 630,000 people new to the city.
- With 51 City Council districts and a population of 8.8 million that means the Commission must draw new districts with an average of approximately 172,882 residents each.

Why it Matters

- The City Council is a co-equal branch of the local government with the Mayor.
- The City Council has power over the city's \$101 billion budget and votes on issues such as:
 - Expansion of housing access programs
 - Property tax rebates for small homeowners
 - Restoration of parks and sanitation cuts
 - Investments in community safety programs
- That's why New Yorkers' opinions are important in shaping new council districts.

Population Trends

- The Commission must draw new maps that reflect the growth of the general population and of our Hispanic and Asian populations which exploded since the last census.
- Hispanics grew by about 154,000 people.
- Asians by 345,000 people.
- Meanwhile, the city's Black and white populations have shrunk by 84,000 and 3,000, respectively.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965

- Among the legal considerations the commission must make when drawing maps is the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965.¹
- It prohibits a new district map from denying or diluting the voting power of racial and language minorities.

¹ Following the Supreme Court case *Shelby County v. Holder*, 570 U.S. 529 (2013), New York City does not need to obtain preclearance of its maps from the United States Department of Justice pursuant to Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act.

Population Deviation

Districts should be roughly equal in population pursuant to the one-person one-vote doctrine of representation but the NYC council districts are allowed a level of deviation--the law provides a "five percent deviation" rule.

The average population for the council districts is 172, 882. Under this five percent rule, the difference between least populous district and most populous district cannot exceed five percent. For example, if the least populous district is 168,900 (appx. - 2.3% below the average) then the most populous district cannot be more than 177,549 (appx. +2.7% above the average)

City Charter Criteria

The City Charter also requires that the district map ensures the “fair and effective representation” of racial and language minority groups protected by the VRA.

Additionally, the Charter requires the Commission to:

Districing Requirements

- 1 Keep neighborhoods and communities intact.
- 2 Keep districts compact.
- 3 Limit crossover districts.
- 4 Avoid splitting voters of the same political party for purposes of diminishing effective representation of such voters
- 5 Avoid oddly shaped districts

Districting Requirements (continued)

- **Contiguous Districts.** The Charter requires that each of the districts be contiguous. Whenever a part of a district is separated by water, there must be a connection by a bridge, tunnel, tramway, or regular ferry service.
- **Limit on crossover districts.** Although districts should not cross borough lines “to the maximum extent practicable if a district does cover into two boroughs, then no other district can cross over into the same two boroughs.”

Public Input

- The Commission is dedicated to incorporating public input into the redistricting process.
- The public can participate and share their input by:
 - Testifying at a public hearing
 - E-mailing testimony to publictestimony@redistricting.nyc.gov
 - Mailing in testimony to 253 Broadway, 3rd Floor, New York, NY 10007
 - Using Districtr to create your own map
- New Yorkers are experts on their own communities and the Commission needs to hear from them as they redraw the City Council district lines.

Timelines

The Charter provides certain timelines for the districting process – for example, there are timeframes to submit draft maps, make these plans available to the public for inspection and comment, and submit revised maps to the council.

These timelines can be reasonably extended so that the Districting Commission can achieve its mission to draw district maps that take the public's input into account and comply with the law.

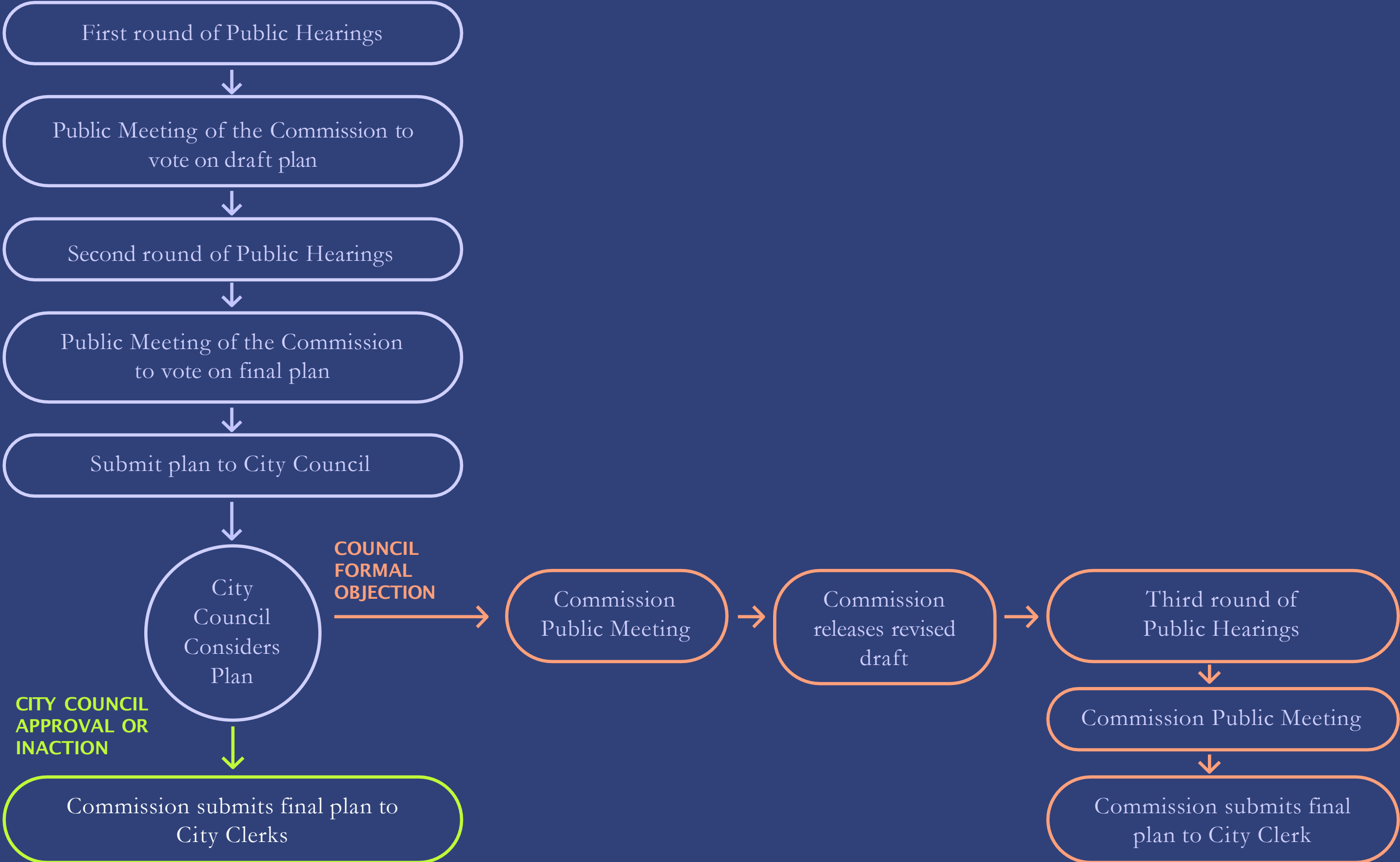
The commission's timeframe for submitting a final plan is Dec. 7th, 2022.

NYC Districting Commission Calendar

(subject to change)

Phase	Date
Five Borough Public Hearings	May 25, June 27 and 29, July 6 and 7
Commission vote to release preliminary plan	July 15 th
Five Borough Public Hearings (5:30pm to 9pm unless otherwise indicated)	Aug. 16 (Queens - Museum of the Moving Image) Aug. 17 (Bronx - Lehman College (CUNY)) Aug. 18 (Staten Island - Borough Hall) Aug 21 (Brooklyn - Medgar Evers College (CUNY)) – <i>3:30pm to 7pm</i> Aug. 22 (Manhattan - Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture)
Submit plan to City Council	September 22

Process



Resources

- [Preliminary Plan](#)
- [Districtr – Build your own City Council district](#)
- [NYC Department of City Planning Census Maps](#)
- [Current City Council Maps](#)
- [NYC Open Data](#)

Anyone who would like to submit testimony on the 51 city council maps can write to the commission at publictestimony@redistricting.nyc.gov