

GLOSSARY OF REDISTRICTING TERMS

Term	Definition
Allocation	The process of distributing information available for one level of geography to a lower level.
Alternative Population Base	A count other than total population from the federal decennial census that is used for redistricting.
ACS	American Community Survey, a nationwide survey that assists local officials, community leaders, and businesses in understanding the changes taking place in their communities. It is considered "the premier source for detailed population and housing information" in the US. It can be used to determine citizen voting age population, but is not the same as the decennial census, which must be used to determine total population within a geographic area.
Apportionment	The process of assigning seats in a legislative body among pre-existing political subdivisions such as states or counties. In the past, some states assigned districts on the basis of county boundaries and therefore continue to call their redistricting process by the name of apportionment.
At-large	A method of election in which all candidates run against each other on one ballot, and they are elected by the whole population of a city.
Census	A complete count or enumeration of the population; the federal census is mandated by the U.S. Constitution in Article 1, section 2.
Census block	The smallest level of census geography used by the Census Bureau to collect and report census data.
Census block group	A collection of blocks used by the Census Bureau to collect and report census data.
Census Bureau	The U.S. Bureau of the Census, which is part of the Department of Commerce, and conducts the decennial Census of Population and Housing, as well as numerous ongoing projects for the federal government. The mission for the Bureau is to "Count Everyone Once, Only Once and in the Right Place" in the decennial census.
Census data	Information and statistics on the population of the United States gathered by the Census Bureau and released to the states.
Census geography	The geographic units for which census information is tabulated and reported with several hierarchies; starting with the most basic (census block) and progressing to census block group to census tract to county to state.
Census tract	A collection of census block groups used by the Census Bureau to collect and report census data.

Term	Definition
Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP)	Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP) is the total population that is age 18 and over and a citizen. (Related to VAP)
Commission	A statutory or constitutional body charged with researching, advising or enacting policy. Redistricting commissions have been used to draw districts for cities, state legislatures and Congress.
Community of interest	A Community of interest, as defined by the California Elections Code, is "a contiguous population which shares common social and economic interests that should be included within a single district for purposes of its effective and fair representation." Communities of interest can be a neighborhood or community that would benefit from being in a single Council district because of shared interests, views, or characteristics. Possible features of a "community of interest" include: school attendance areas, mobile home parks, business areas, income, or language spoken.
Compactness	A term used to describe a district's geographic shape. Compactness in redistricting cases often focuses on the regularity or jaggedness of a district boundary and on the extent to which the district's geographic territory is dispersed from its center.
Contiguity	A term used to describe a district in which all geographic parts of the district are connected to each other.
Cracking or Fracturing	Cracking or Fracturing: A form of dilution occurring when districts are drawn so as to divide a geographically compact group of people with shared characteristics, for example, dividing a minority community into two or more districts. If the minority community is politically cohesive and could elect a preferred candidate if placed in one district, but, due to cracking, the minority population is divided into two or more districts where it no longer has any electoral control or influence, the voting strength of the minority population is diluted.
CVRA	The California Voting Rights Act, as found in California Elections Code Sections 14025-14032.
Deviation	The measure of how much a district or plan varies from the ideal population, however defined, per district. Deviation can be expressed as an absolute number or as a percentage.
Dilution or vote dilution	Occurs when the voting strength of a politically cohesive minority group is weakened or watered down by an election system or redistricting plan.
District	The boundaries that define the constituency from which a public official is elected.
District-based elections	District-based elections divide a jurisdiction into separate geographic districts, and voters within each district vote for candidates residing within their same district. In district-based elections, voters only vote for candidates in their own districts; they do not vote for candidates outside their district.

Term	Definition
Effective minority district	A district in which minority voters are able to elect their preferred candidate of choice.
Gerrymander	The drawing of political boundaries to give one group or party an advantage over another.
GIS - Geographic Information System	Computer software used for creating or revising plans and analyzing geographically oriented data.
Ideal population	The number of persons to be placed in each district to obtain equal population. The ideal population for each district is obtained by taking the total population of the jurisdiction and dividing it by the number of districts to be redistricted in that jurisdiction.
Incumbency protection (criterion)	Drawing district lines to ensure that a current elected official's house remains in a district.
Majority-minority district	Term used by courts for seats where a group or a single racial or language minority constitutes a majority of the citizen voting age population. (These are also referred to as "effective districts.")
Metes and bounds	A detailed and very specialized description of district boundaries using specific geographic features and street directions as are usually found in describing real property for legal purposes.
Municipal Code	The collection of laws passed by a local governing body (often of a county, city, village, township, or other similar governmental subdivision). Brentwood's Municipal Code may be found at: http://qcode.us/codes/brentwood/
Natural boundaries	District boundaries that include natural geographic features such as bodies of water, mountains, etc.
One person, one vote	A constitutional standard established by the U.S. Supreme Court that means all districts for representational bodies should be approximately equal in population. The degree of equality may vary in congressional plans vs legislative/local plans.
"One-person, one-vote"	A U.S. Constitutional requirement that requires each district to be substantially equal in total population.
Ordinance	The name typically used for a law passed by a local political subdivision or entity, such as a city, county, village, or town. Ordinances may address a wide variety of local issues.
Overall range	The difference in population between the largest and smallest districts in a districting plan in either absolute (persons) or relative (percentage) terms.
Packing	A term used when one group is consolidated as a super-majority in a smaller number of districts, thus reducing its electoral influence in nearby districts.

Term	Definition
PL 94-171	The federal law that requires the U.S. Census Bureau to provide states with data for use in redistricting and mandates that states define the census blocks to be used for collecting data.
Plan	A set of boundaries for all districts of a representational body, also known as a map.
Plurality	The margin by which the votes for the winning candidate exceeds the votes for the losing candidate with the highest number of votes; if the winner receives more than 50% of the total votes they win with a majority, otherwise they win with a plurality.
Precinct	An area created by election officials to group voters for assignment to a designated polling place so that an election can be conducted. (Note: Precinct boundaries may change several times over the course of a decade).
Protected Class	According to the CVRA, a protected class is broadly defined as a class of voters who are members of a race, color, or language minority group as defined in the federal Voting Rights Act. (California Voting Rights Act, Cal. Elect. Code § 14026(d)).
Redistricting	The process of drawing new political boundaries (district lines) within a state or local jurisdiction after the census.
Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act (VRA)	A section of the federal Voting Rights Act that applies nationwide and prohibits any voting procedure (including a redistricting plan) that dilutes minority voting strength.
Single-member district	District electing only one representative.
Single-member election	Election in which only one candidate is elected. While this is how all elections are held in single-member districts, it can also occur in multi-member districts if seats within the district are uniquely designated and not all are elected at the same time.
Standard deviation	A statistical formula measuring variance from the average for the entire set of data.
Tabulation	The totaling and reporting of the census data from individual responses for all levels of census geography.
TIGER	Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing. The system and digital database developed at the U.S. Census Bureau to support computer maps used by the census.
Traditional redistricting principles	Factors traditionally used by a state or local jurisdiction to perform redistricting. (Note: Examples of traditional redistricting principles include: compactness, contiguity, respect for political subdivisions, respect for communities of interest, and protection of incumbents).

Term	Definition
VAP	Voting Age Population. The number of persons 18 years of age and over.
VTD - Voting District	A census term for a geographic area, such as an election precinct, where election information and data are collected; boundaries are provided to the Census Bureau by the states. Since boundaries must coincide with census blocks, VTD boundaries may not be the same as the election precinct and may include more than one precinct.
