



CITIZENS UNION OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
Testimony to the City Districting Commission, Bronx Public Hearing
Theresa Doherty, Municipal Affairs Committee Member
January 9, 2012

Good evening, Chair Romano and other members of the City Districting Commission. My name is Theresa Doherty, and I am a volunteer member of Citizens Union, a nonpartisan good government group dedicated to making democracy work for all New Yorkers.

In a letter to the Commission sent earlier this week, Citizens Union provided recommendations for increased transparency, as well as individual districts. I will focus on recommendations for the Bronx tonight on behalf of Citizens Union.

I also speak as someone who has spent much of my adult life in the Bronx. I went to college in Riverdale, I worked for 5 years in a community-based organization just 20 blocks north of here, in Mt. Eden, and I now live in Pelham Bay. What I know from this rich experience is that, while each neighborhood has its distinct voice and needs, there is also the recognition and pride that each community is part of the larger fabric of NYC.

As was discussed at the Manhattan hearing earlier this week, Citizens Union has concerns regarding Council District 8. By placing the majority of District 8 into the Bronx, an imbalance has been created, resulting in Manhattan having districts that are on average 4 percent larger than the ideal district size. Though the proposed District 8 would increase Latino representation in the Bronx by essentially adding a new seat, one has to question whether it does so at too high a cost. East Harlem continues to be divided in the proposed maps, despite the overwhelming opposition of its residents, community groups, and good government groups such as Citizens Union. Additionally, the neighborhood of Woodstock in the South Bronx which is represented by the current district 17 would be divided. We again urge you to correct this district by restoring all of East Harlem into District 8.

I would also like to reiterate Citizens Union's recommendation that the Commission provide to the public in advance of any vote on final maps a written rationale detailing the decision-making of the Commission for each district. For example, the rationale should include how the Commission addressed requirements in the City Charter and specifically address how it handled public requests regarding their districts. This information is essential to ensure that the public has more information about the choices that were made and potentially more confidence in the end result.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

STATEMENT FROM BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD #10
NEW YORK CITY DISTRICTING COMMISSION
January 9, 2013

Bronx Community Board #10, is represented by 12th, 13th and 18th Councilmatic Districts in the northeast Bronx. For many years our Board, with the assistance of our elected officials at all levels of government have endeavored to preserve and enhance the communities that we have been entrusted to represent. To this end we request that any re-districting plan preserve the following communities within the 13th Councilmatic District: City Island, Pelham Bay, Country Club, Throggs Neck and Westchester Square. These communities are contiguous and naturally flow right into one another. They have many characteristics in common such as housing stock, transportation routes and educational institutions, but more importantly, they derive their sense of community from being in one Councilmatic District. To remove them from this District and place them into others, would do irreparable harm to the good efforts on the part of our Community Board and elected.

Thank you for your attention and consideration in this matter.



900 Grand Concourse
Bronx, New York 10451

• 718-590-5433 •

Cary Goodman, Ph.D.
Carygood@aol.com

January 25, 2013

To: The NYC Redistricting Commission

From: The Capitol District Management Association Board

Re: Council District 16

In a vote of the Board taken at its meeting on January 23, 2013, its members requested that:

“ The integrity of the 161st Street corridor which includes The Bronx Borough Hall and Yankee Stadium be maintained in one Councilmanic district.”

Those voting included the area property owners as well as representatives of:

Councilwoman Foster

Comptroller Liu

Borough President Diaz

Community Board 4

The vote was unanimous with one abstention from the Mayor's representative.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

CARLOS SIERRA

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY DISTRICTING COMMISSION

Good evening, my name is Lennin Reyes, the assistant press director for Carlos Sierra. As many of you know Carlos Sierra is a community activist and is running for the 16th City Council District in the Bronx. My comments reflect those of myself, Carlos Sierra and the rest of the SIERRA 2013 Political Committee.

We congratulate and thank the Districting Commission for placing the Concourse Village housing development back in the 16th after originally placing it in the adjacent 17th District. This housing complex has a close affinity to the 16th District as it has been a historically strong African American voting bloc and therefore a strong voice of the community.

We are also thankful for the placement of High Bridge north of West 166th Street into the 16th after it was initially being moved to the 8th District. It would have been very hurtful to the spirit of the Community to move High Bridge out of the Bronx into Manhattan, we are happy to see it in the 16th.

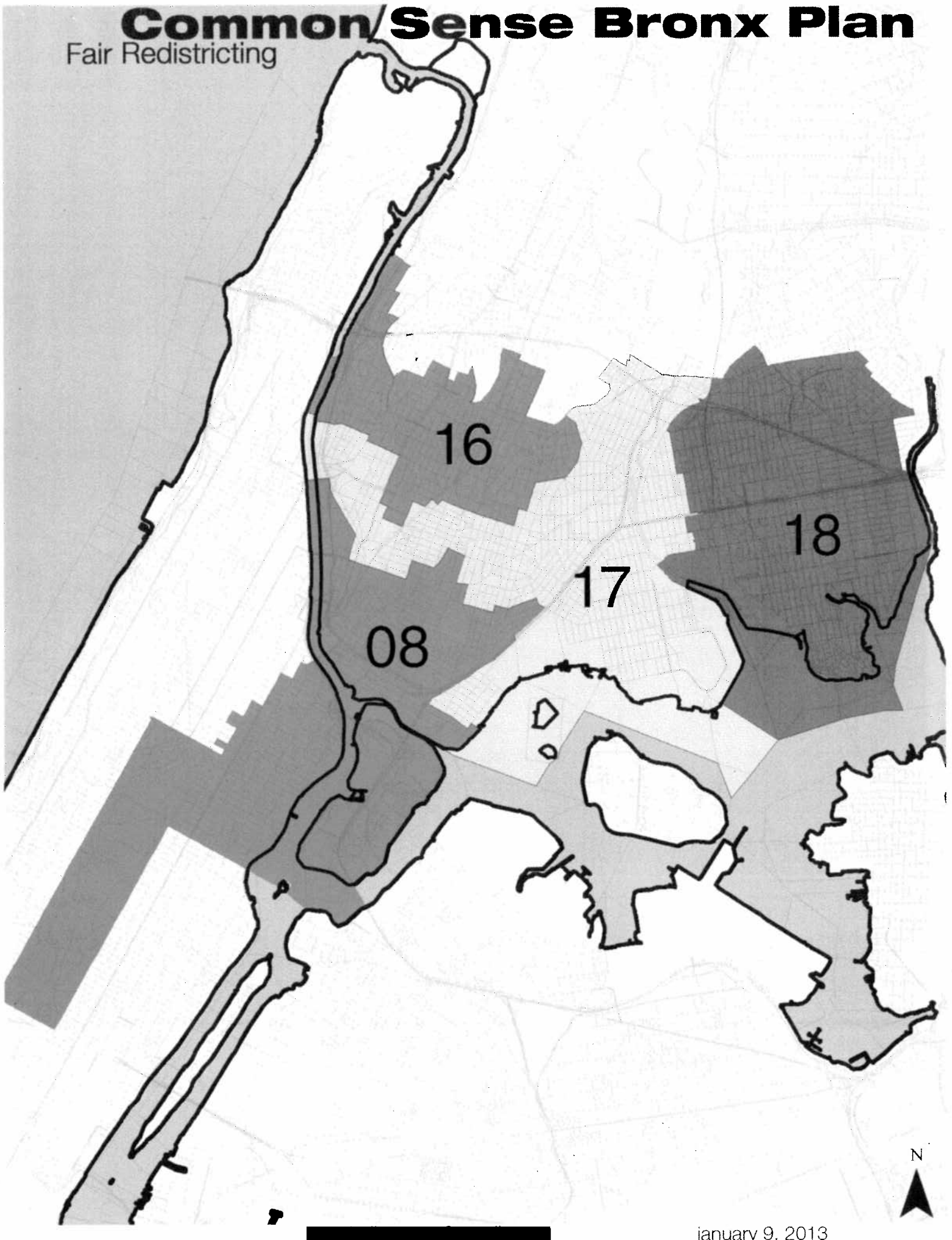
However, there is a major landmark that is near our District and seems to be a part of it, but yet is drawn into the sprawling District 8. That landmark is Yankee Stadium. If any district's residents are affected the most by anything associated with the stadium, it's those in District 16. Whenever an event takes place at Yankee Stadium, District 16 residents both benefit and suffer from it. While they may bring revenue and attention to the area, residents in Morrisania and High Bridge deal with noise, littering and long commutes thanks to bus reroutes resulting from closures to streets near the Stadium. We ask that you strongly consider placing Yankee Stadium in District 16.

Lastly is an issue in the northern part of the district. While the Districting Commission placed High Bridge into District 16, Morris Heights is now being split between Districts 14 and 16. We would like for you to place more of the West Tremont/Morris Heights area back into the 16th. The maps show that District 14 is overpopulated by 7,592 residents and District 16 is underpopulated by 5,429 residents. Morris Heights has strong socioeconomic ties with High Bridge and Morrisania, as these three high-density, low-income communities feature growing Dominican and West African populations coexisting with longstanding Puerto Ricans and African Americans. We believe a greater inclusion of Morris Heights in District 16 would be appropriate.

In conclusion on behalf of Carlos Sierra and SIERRA 2013 we thank the Districting Commission for hearing our testimony and ask that it be taken into consideration, we also ask that the Districting Commission pass the new maps as soon as reasonably possible.

Common/Sense Bronx Plan

Fair Redistricting



january 9, 2013

Testimony of A. Mychal Johnson

My name is Arthur Mychal Johnson. I am a resident of the Mott Haven neighborhood in the South Bronx and a member of Community Board 1. I am here to give testimony to implore the New York City Redistricting Commission to reconsider and correct the potentially devastating effects on the South Bronx of the proposed December 4th Revised Plan.

After consultation with many of my colleagues in the Bronx and Manhattan, I have carefully prepared a revised plan, entitled the Common Sense Bronx Plan, to ensure fair and effective representation of the South Bronx, keep in tact communities of interest in the South Bronx and ensure compact and contiguous districts.

1) Population: The December 4th Revised Plan reduces population values in Bronx Districts 16, 17 and 18 in a haphazard carve out to inflate the population in District 8 to the maximum possible deviation of 4.99%. Population deviations should be as minimal as possible to achieve the least amount of impact to racial and language minority groups and their historic political representation. The Common Sense Bronx Plan equalizes the population distribution among Districts 8, 16, 17 and 18, with a maximum deviation of 1.4% among all four districts.

2) Fair and Effective Representation and Communities of Interest: The December 4th Revised Plan dramatically disrupts the fair and effective representation of certain communities of interest in particular. Approximately 9,000 African Americans are cut out of District 16; 6,000 African Americans are cut out of District 17; and the African American population in District 8 is arbitrarily increased despite the district's 65% Hispanic majority. I urge you to carefully reconsider disrupting this historically important community of interest and reflect on the very foundation of the Voting Rights Act. The Common Sense Bronx Plan more carefully balances population distribution among the Bronx districts to preserve fair and effective representation while maintaining below standard deviations as well as ideal population values in surrounding districts.

3) Compactness: The hasty redrawing of District 8 in the December 4th Revised Plan stretches from 59th Street in Manhattan to 166th Street in the Bronx, making District 8 a staggering 107 blocks long, five times the width of the district at its widest point. The Common Sense Bronx Plan further reduces the length of District 8 by scaling back illogical boundaries to the north to make the district more compact while maintaining below standard deviations as well as ideal population values in surrounding districts.

4) Contiguity: Finally, and most importantly, the December 4th Revised Plan continues to strip Randall's Island from District 8 and arbitrarily assign it to Queen's District 22. Randall's Island is and has historically been connected to the Bronx and Manhattan. The island is in a Bronx assembly district and is part of Community Board 11 in Manhattan. There is no association with Queens, nor has there ever been. There are four bridges from the Bronx and Manhattan to Randall's Island whereas Queens only has one. Our children need and deserve access to that open space, particularly when our community faces asthma rates at 8 times the national average, and this will not be prioritized if the recreational island is given over to Queens. The Common Sense Bronx Plan reincorporates Randall's Island into District 8 while maintaining below standard deviations as well as ideal population values in surrounding districts.

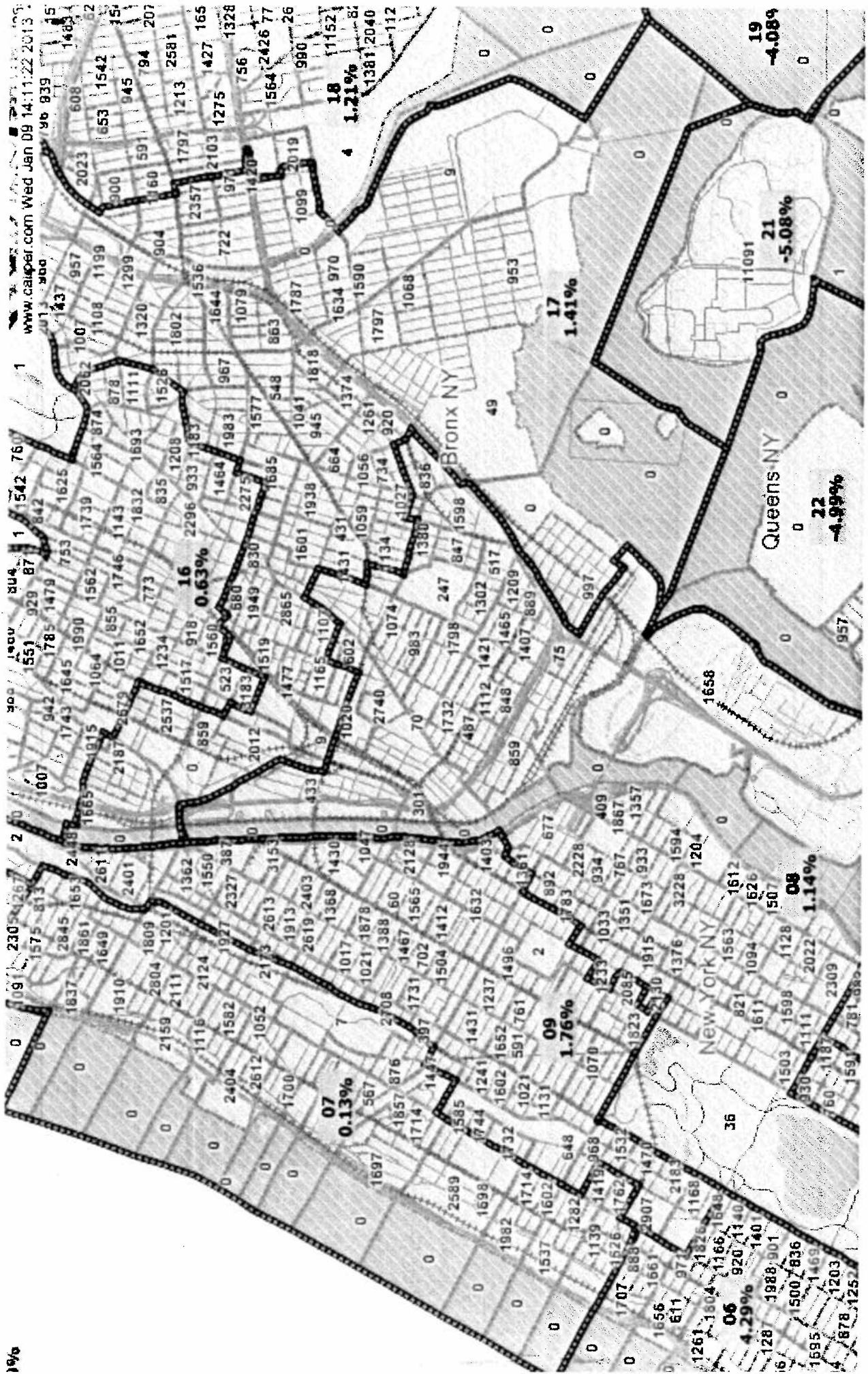
5) Communities of Interest: One of the criteria for districting is keeping intact neighborhoods and communities with established ties of common interest and association. The South Bronx

Testimony of A. Mychal Johnson

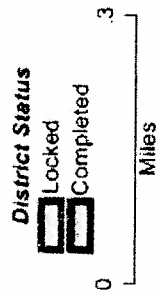
waterfront is lined with a publicly-owned 96 acre parcel of land called the Harlem River Rail Yards. The December 4th Revised Plan continues to slice in half this critical waterfront property and divide it between two different city council districts, and this is unacceptable. The South Bronx waterfront is crucial to the district's short, medium and long-term development, and the community surrounding this land has for decades been united in common interest around its usage. For more than 10 years, the South Bronx has struggled for and recently achieved the Randall's Island Connector, a footbridge from the Bronx to Randall's Island that crosses over a narrow waterway separating our residents from 480 acres of green space. As currently configured in the December 4th Revised Plan, tens of thousands of South Bronx residents that are within a one mile walking distance to the connector would have to cross district lines to access the footbridge despite a decade of having worked together for its completion. The Common Sense Bronx Plan corrects this obvious error and keeps in tact the South Bronx waterfront while maintaining below standard deviations as well as ideal population values in surrounding districts.

6) Communities of Interest: Another area of common interest and association which has been arbitrarily stripped away from Mott Haven and Port Morris in the December 4th Revised Plan is the central business district of the South Bronx, known as the HUB, which is centered at 3rd Avenue and 149th Street. In its hasty effort to make District 8 take up a greater percentage of the Bronx, the commission seemed to carefully carve out the economic foundation of the neighborhood. As one of the poorest districts in New York City, residents of the South Bronx are more than anything an economic community of interest. The Common Sense Bronx Plan places the South Bronx tax revenue base back into District 8 while maintaining below standard deviations as well as ideal population values in surrounding districts.

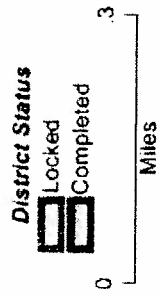
For these and other key issues with the December 4th Revised Plan, I urge you to reconsider the lines you have drawn for District 8. This is one of most important and potentially harmful structural changes to one of the cities most long neglected areas.

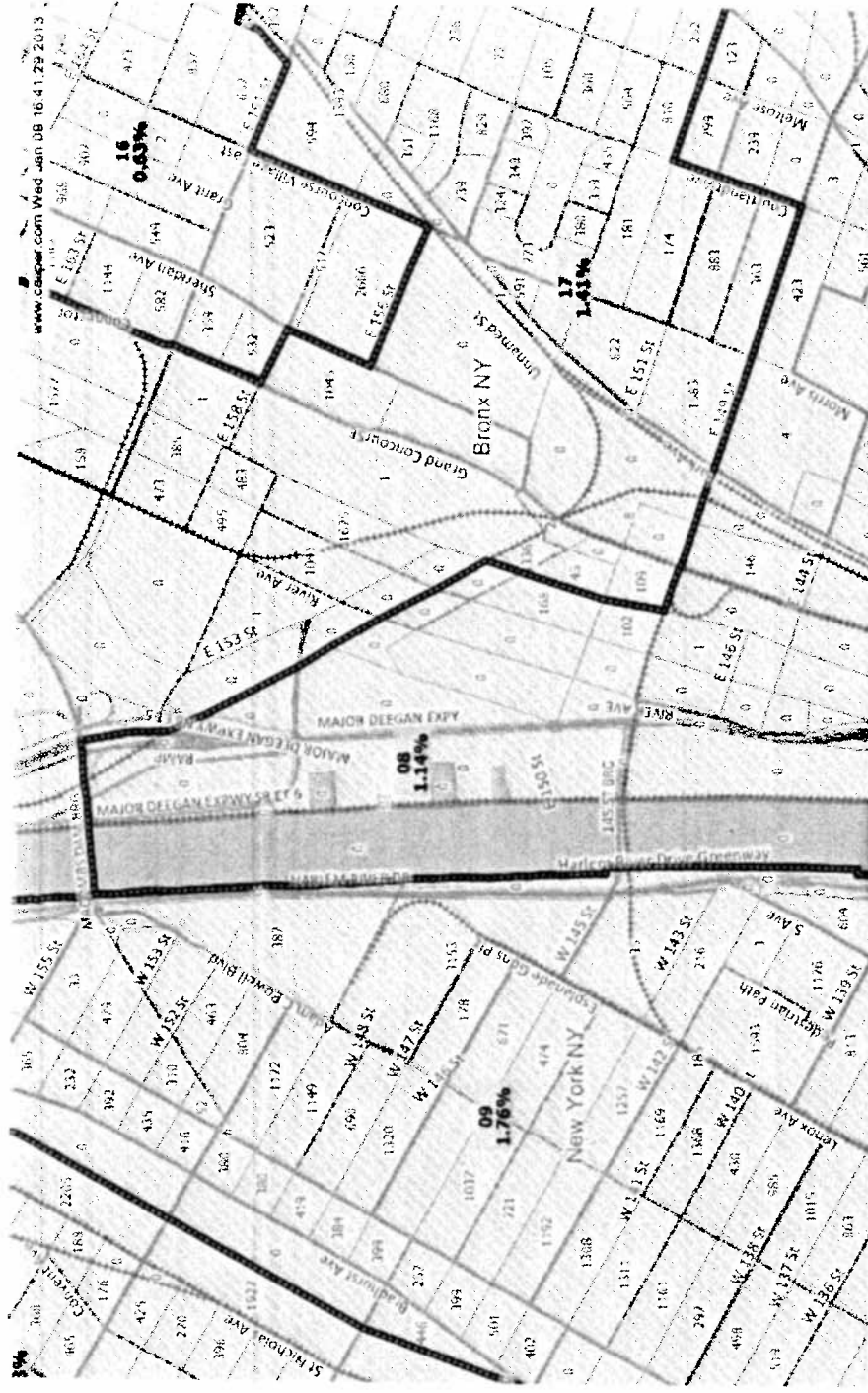


Common Sense Bronx Plan - amychal



Common Sense Bronx Plan - amychal





Testimony of Corrine Kohut, Esq.

My name is Corrine Kohut. I am a resident of the Mott Haven neighborhood in the South Bronx and am here to give testimony against the current redistricting lines as proposed in the December 4th Revised Plan of the New York City Redistricting Commission, specifically as they relate to District 8.

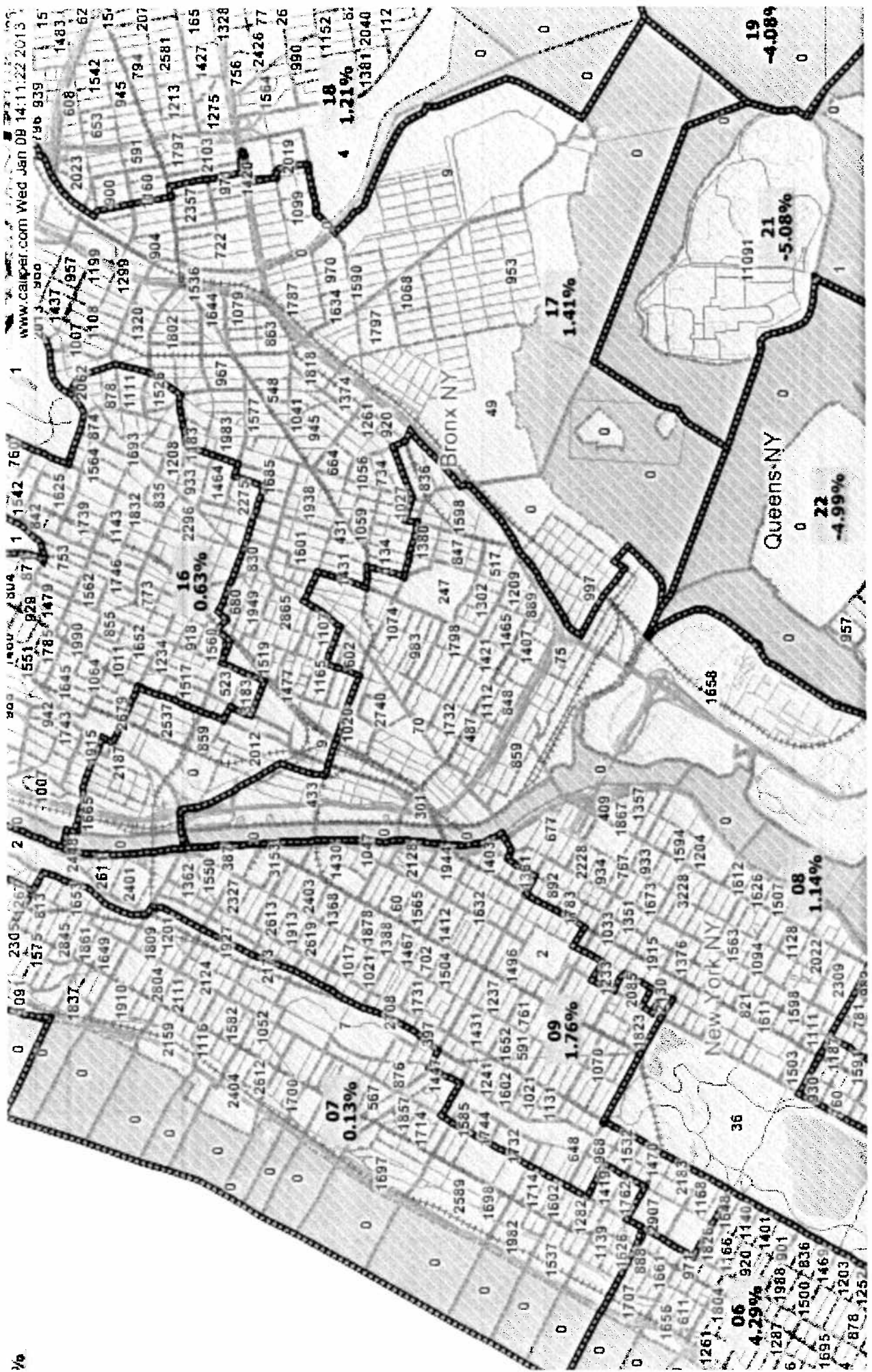
I support the Common Sense Bronx Plan and urge you to adjust the lines of District 8 to reflect this plan, which ensures fair and effective representation of the South Bronx, keeping in tact communities of interest and ensuring compact and contiguous districts.

I agree with the concerns and solutions raised by my neighbors and colleagues Arthur Mychal Johnson and Angel Lopez with respect to the need to ensure minimal population deviations in the new districts, the fair and effective representation of communities of interest, the scaling back of illogical boundaries to the north and the reincorporation of Randall's Island into District 8. All of these are accomplished by the Common Sense Bronx Plan, which also addresses two additional key issues I would like to bring to your attention.

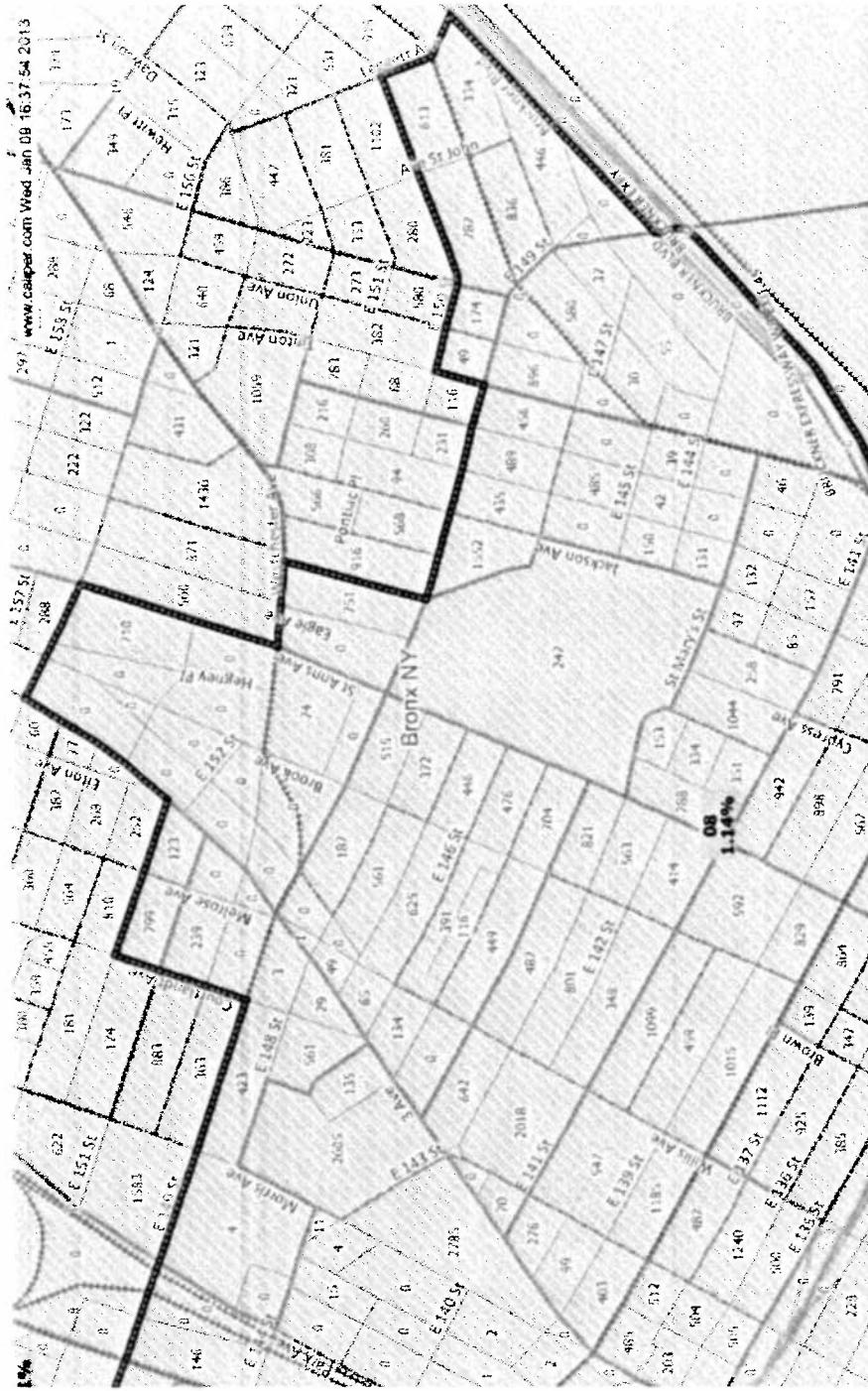
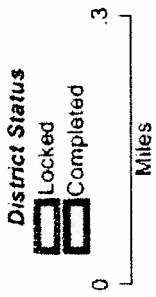
One of the criteria for districting is keeping intact neighborhoods and communities with established ties of common interest and association. The South Bronx waterfront is lined with a publicly-owned 96 acre parcel of land called the Harlem River Rail Yards. The December 4th Revised Plan continues to slice in half this critical waterfront property and divide it between two different city council districts, and this is unacceptable. The South Bronx waterfront is crucial to the district's short, medium and long-term development, and the community surrounding this land has for decades been united in common interest around its usage. For more than 10 years, the South Bronx has struggled for and recently achieved the Randall's Island Connector, a footbridge from the Bronx to Randall's Island that crosses over a narrow waterway separating our residents from 480 acres of green space. As currently configured in the December 4th Revised Plan, tens of thousands of South Bronx residents that are within a one mile walking distance to the connector would have to cross district lines to access the footbridge despite a decade of having worked together for its completion. The Common Sense Bronx Plan corrects this obvious error and keeps in tact the South Bronx waterfront while maintaining below standard deviations as well as ideal population values in surrounding districts.

Another area of common interest and association which has been arbitrarily stripped away from Mott Haven and Port Morris in the December 4th Revised Plan is the central business district of the South Bronx, known as the HUB, which is centered at 3rd Avenue and 149th Street. In its hasty effort to make District 8 take up a greater percentage of the Bronx, the commission seemed to carefully carve out the economic foundation of the neighborhood. As one of the poorest districts in New York City, residents of the South Bronx are more than anything an economic community of interest. The Common Sense Bronx Plan places the South Bronx tax revenue base back into District 8 while maintaining below standard deviations as well as ideal population values in surrounding districts.

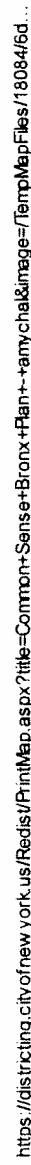
Thank you in advance for addressing these concerns and embracing a viable alternative for District 8 in the Common Sense Bronx Plan.



Common Sense Bronx Plan - amychal

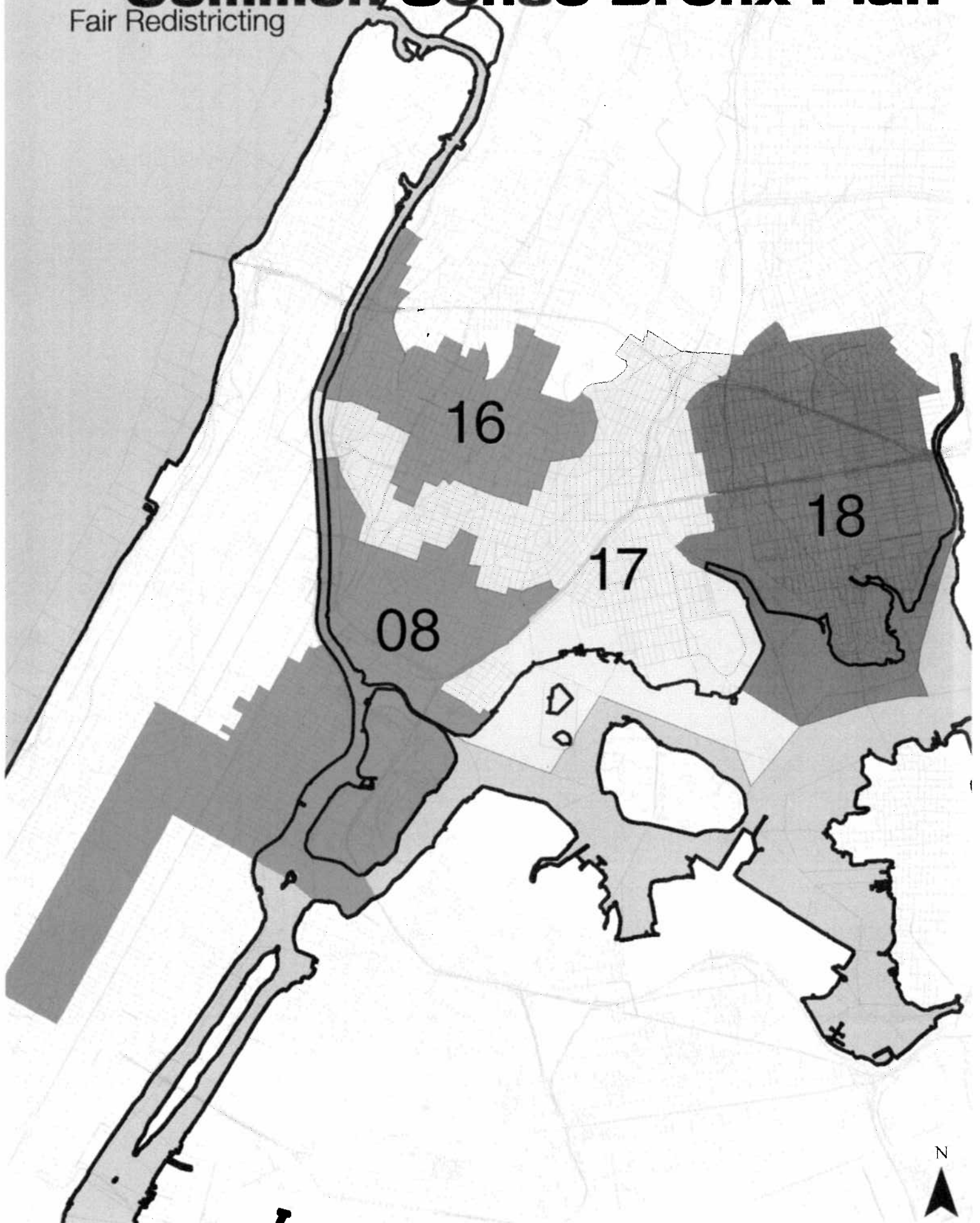






Common/Sense Bronx Plan

Fair Redistricting



Testimony of Monxo Lopez

My name is Monxo López. I am a resident of Mott Haven in the South Bronx and a map-maker/cartographer by trade. I am here to give testimony to demand the New York City Redistricting Commission to correct the potentially devastating effects on the South Bronx of the proposed December 4th Revised Plan.

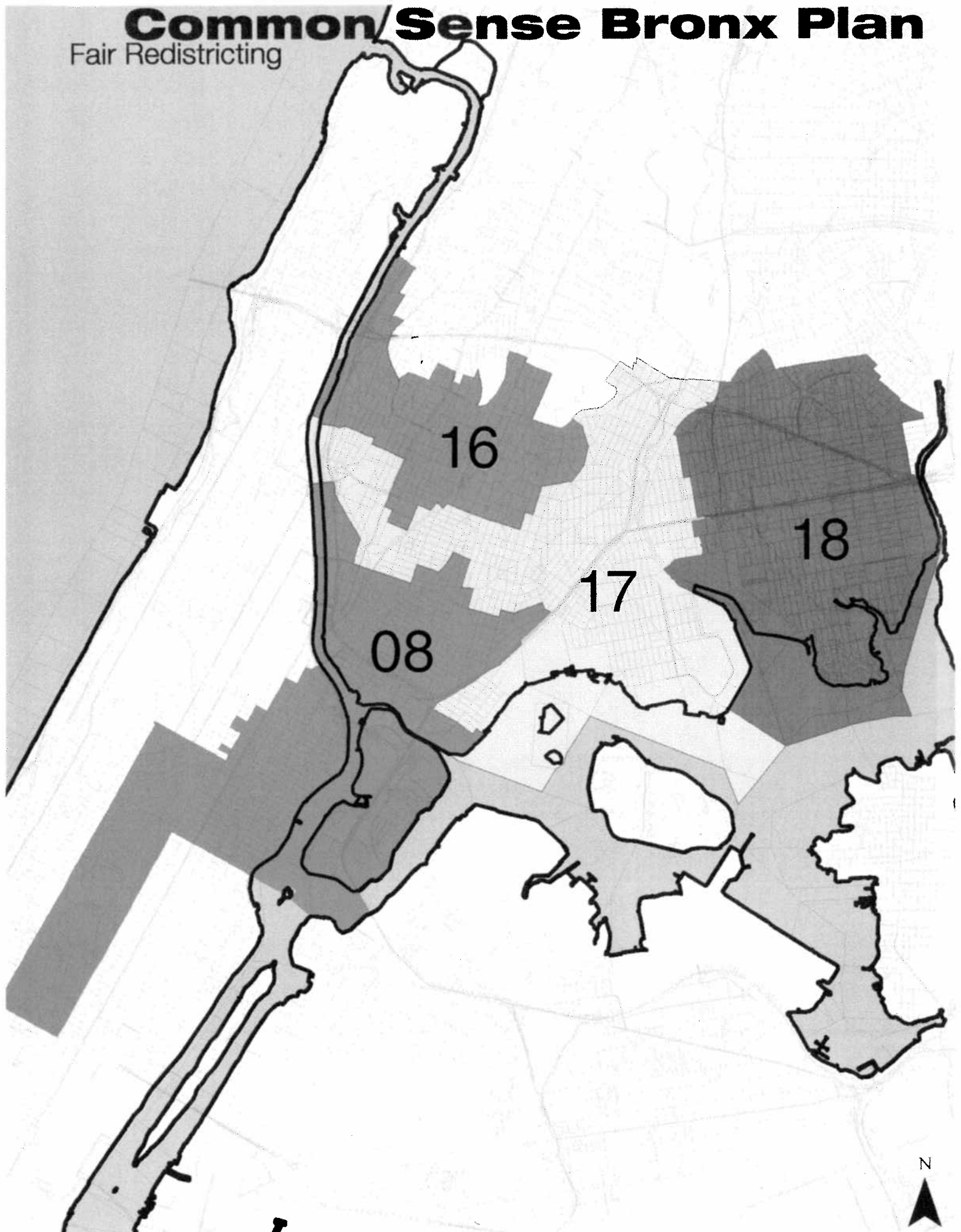
There are several key issues we would like to address. Given time limitations, I will cover two key issues, and my colleagues will cover additional issues.

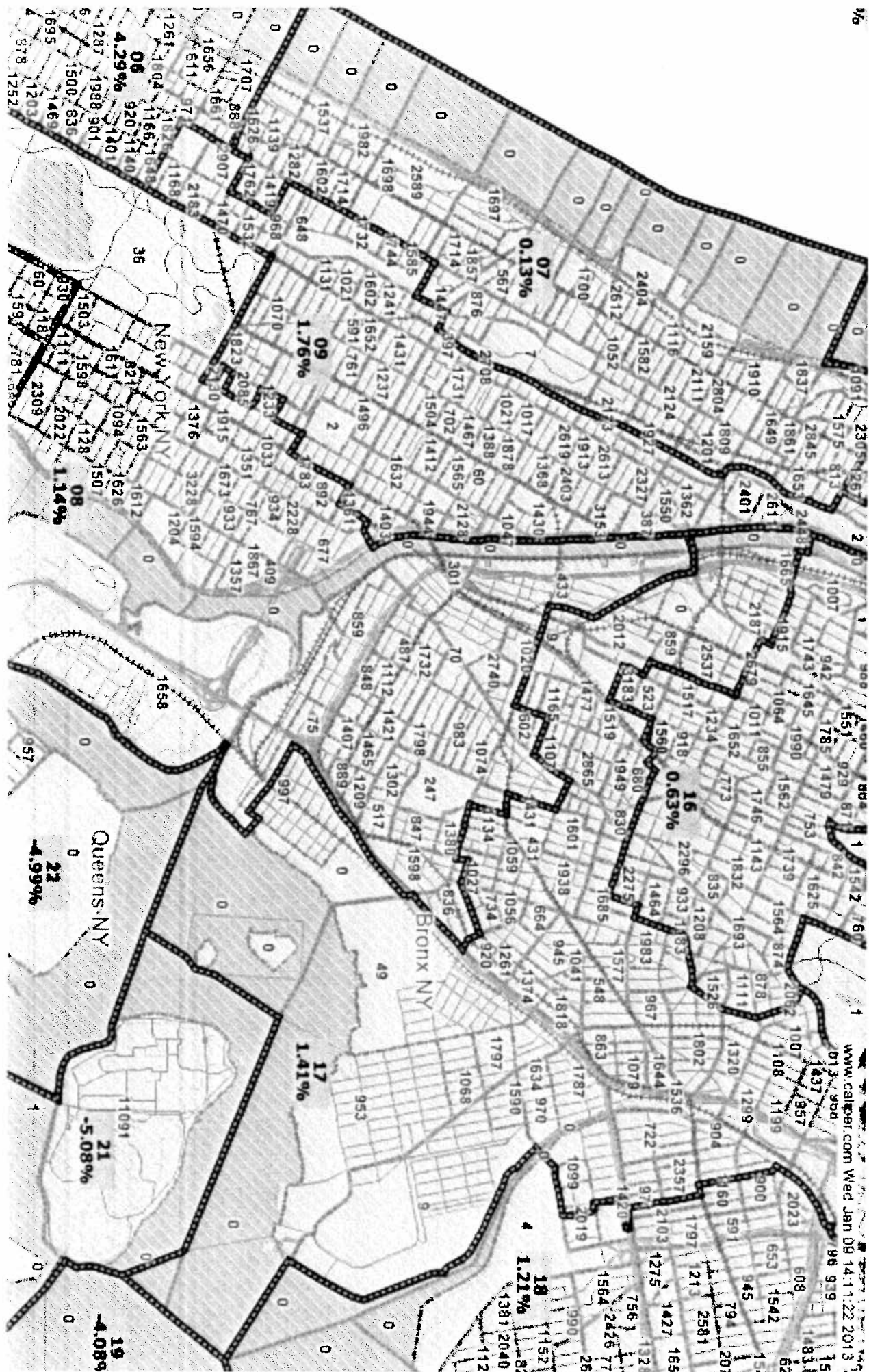
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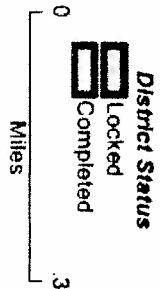
Common/Sense Bronx Plan

Fair Redistricting





Common Sense Bronx Plan - amychal



Hello,

I have lived in the Van Nest community for all of my life, and have been active in community and civic groups for years.

The neighborhoods of Van Nest have been traditionally split at all levels of government districting – the council, the assembly, the senate and congress. This has lead to fractured representation, because we are literally at the ends of almost everyone's districts! With every elected having just a little piece of our neighborhood, it has been hard to get the funding and attention Van Nest deserves. It is hard to get government to coordinate services when the park my neighbors' children play in across the street is in someone else's district!

At the Council, we have been traditionally split between two districts, the 13th and the 15th. Just as Van Nest and its leaders have learned how to make this arrangement in recent years, we get a new map that splits our district not two ways, but three.

In the current map, we are now split between the 13th, the 15th and the 18th district. While we have worked well with the Council Member from 18 on some issues, it nonetheless means we now have to engage three Council Members on every issue for our community while many communities have just one.

The border between Van Nest and the 18th is a clear line down Tremont Avenue and the Amtrak train line, which separates Parkchester and Soundview from Van Nest. These lines crossed that natural community boundary to add just a handful of blocks to the 18th.

Please reconsider how you split the community of Van Nest. I think its better to be in two districts, not three.

Also, I have heard some folks from Pelham Parkway North and Parkside Houses complain of a similar problem of being split between 4 Council Districts. I share their concern, because it is similar to mine about my own neighborhood in Van Nest. They have been at the edge of every district for years, and are cut off from the majority of the 11th district by the Bronx River and the Bronx River Parkway.

I ask the commission to do their best to unite these communities or at least limit how chopped up they are among districts.

Thanks.

Joseph Bombace
Joseph Bombace

EMAIL: [REDACTED]
Resident of 13TH Council District

Jonathan Ettricks
Director of Outreach
NYC Redistricting Commission
253 Broadway, 7th Floor
New York, NY 10007

January 25, 2013

Dear Mr. Jonathan Ettricks:

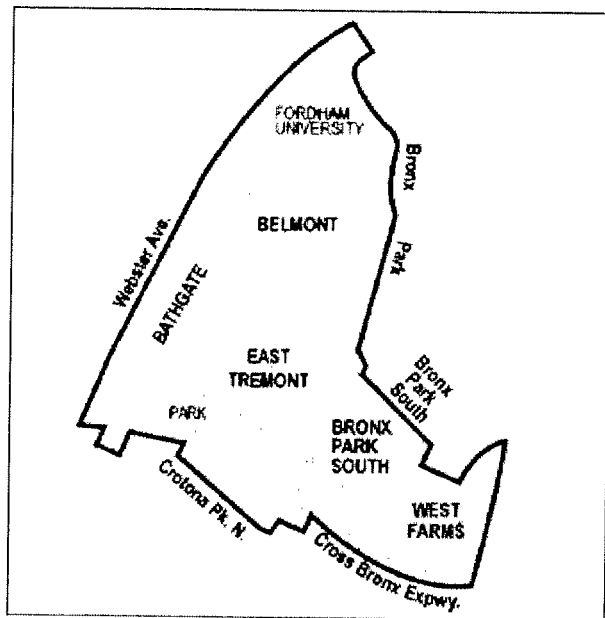
I am writing to express my concerns and suggestions regarding the 15th City Council, which overlaps into the West Farms and Van Nest communities of the 87th Assembly District.

In the current proposed lines for the 15th City Council District, the southern portion of the West Farms community is being separated resulting in the loss of some vital and historical parts:

St. Thomas Aquinas Church & Elementary School, Elementary School #6, Intermediate School 318, Public School 211, Fairmount Playground, Miracle Garden Park, West Farms Square Train Station, West Farms Center and other community establishments.

To separate such important parts of a neighborhood is disadvantageous to my West Farm constituents. I respectfully suggest that the south district line of the 15th City Council District be redrawn from East Tremont Avenue to the Cross Bronx Expressway, as is the southern district line of Community Board #6.

Thank You,
William Rivera
State Committeeman
87th Assembly District





THE COUNCIL
OF
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

January 9th, 2013

Carl Hum
Executive Director
New York City Districting Commission
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mr. Hum:

We write regarding the Commission's proposed district lines for the Bronx.

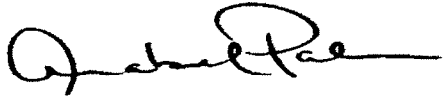
While we are thankful that the Commission has addressed many of the concerns that have been raised by Bronx residents and elected officials alike, our opinion remains that the borough can support, and should be granted, a ninth Council district. While we appreciate that the eight and a half districts currently being proposed by the Commission is a positive step forward, considering the borough's population growth over the last ten years, we continue to believe an addition Council district in the borough is not only appropriate but also necessary to ensure that the Bronx gets it's fair and equitable share.

First, it is important to consider that, during the City's last redistricting effort, the two largest New York City Council districts were established in the Bronx. Additionally, considering that the average size of a New York Council district is approximately 160,000 residents, it is important to underscore that seven of our current eight Bronx Council districts contain more than 160,000 people. While some Council districts in the City have less than 150,000 inhabitants, two of our eight Council districts have over 175,000 residents. The Bronx currently has 1,392,000 residents and if you divide that by 160,000 (which, again, is the standard Council district size) the borough should have 8.7 Council districts. Conceivably if the Bronx districts were drawn at the low range of the resident deviation – namely at 153,000 residents – the borough would have 9.15 districts. These numbers not only support our opinion that an additional Council district in the Bronx is merited, but highlights the need for more uniformity in the number of residents contained in each of the fifty-one Council district across the five boroughs as well.

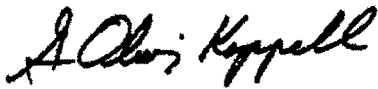
In many of our borough's neighborhoods, Bronxites face significant economic challenges. Every day – in each one of the current eight Bronx Council districts - constituents contact our offices for assistance with a variety of critical issues, including housing, child care, education, employment and health care. We work tirelessly to save funding and support programs that help meet the needs of our borough's constituency, despite the slumping economy. However, considering the growing number of residents in our already bloated Council districts, our ability to adequately assist our constituents could easily become compromised if appropriate action is not taken in the redistricting process. By adding a new Council seat, the borough would achieve more equitable district sizes, which would, in turn, lead to more manageable caseloads for our staff. Most importantly, the addition of a ninth district would translate into better services for the borough's constituents.

All except one of the eight current Bronx Council districts are over the average size of districts around the city. Bronxites deserve better than to have overdrawn and overpopulated districts. Quite plainly, our residents deserve their fair share.

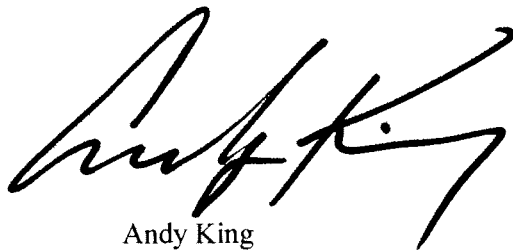
Sincerely,



Annabel Palma
Chair, Bronx Delegation
Council Member
District 18, Bronx



G. Oliver Koppell
Council Member
District 11, Bronx



Andy King
Council Member
District 12, Bronx



James Vacca
Council Member
District 13, Bronx



Fernando Cabrera
Council Member
District 14, Bronx



Joel Rivera
Council Member
District 15, Bronx



Helen D. Foster
Council Member
District 16, Bronx



Maria del Carmen Arroyo
Council Member
District 17, Bronx



Jonathan Ettricks
Director of Outreach
NYC Redistricting Commission
253 Broadway, 7th Floor
New York, NY 10007

January 25, 2013

Dear Mr. Jonathan Ettricks:

I would first like to commend your commission's hard work and outreach throughout the city regarding City Council redistricting. However, I am writing to express my concerns and suggestions regarding the 15th City Council, which overlaps into the West Farms and Van Nest communities of the 87th Assembly District.

In the current proposed lines for the 15th City Council District, the southern portion of the West Farms community is being separated resulting in the loss of some vital and historical parts:

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To separate such important parts of a neighborhood is disadvantageous to my West Farm constituents. I respectfully suggest that the south district line of the 15th City Council District be redrawn from East Tremont Avenue to the Cross Bronx Expressway, as is the southern district line of Community Board #6.

I am happy to see that the Commission recently redrew the 15th City Council district lines to include the entire Van Nest neighborhood. I hope the commission can do the same for the West Farms community.

Thank You,
Luis R. Sepulveda
NYS Assemblymember
87th Assembly District

