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October 4, 2012

Blondel A. Pinnock, Chairman
Lisa Tucker, Secretary
Carmen Tomlinson, Treasurer
Jonathan Hatcher, Asst. Treas.

Barbara Askins, President and CEO, 125th Street Business Improvement District
October 4, 2012 Districting Commission Meeting

Barbara Askins,
President/CEO

Eugene Fata
Roberto Fata
Steven Feldman
Daniel Fevre
Derek Fleming
David Gmach
Drew Greenwald
Karia Hill
Mark Irgang
Ross Jacobs
Alan Jemal
Joseph Jemal
Ramona Lopez
Georgiette Morgan-Thomas
Henrietta Lyle
Jonelle Procope
James Simmons
Mukaram Taheraly
Dr. Joseph Tait
Bernard Warren
Matthew Washington
Steve Williams
Maurice Winley

Hon. Michael Bloomberg
Hon. John Liu
Hon. Scott Stringer
Hon. Inez Dickens

Testimony
in support of the
Upper Manhattan Empowerment Districting Plan (UMED Plan)

I support the UMED plan and believe the district boundaries should be as follows:

1. The district boundaries of the 9th Councilmanic district should be Amsterdam and Morningside Avenues to the west, 110th Street to the south, 155th Street and the Polo Grounds and Rangel Houses to the north, and Lexington and Madison Avenues to the east.
2. The district boundaries of the 7th Councilmanic District should have a contiguous border along the Hudson River to the west, rest at 97th Street to the south, Morningside and Amsterdam Avenues to the west, and follow Fort Washington Avenue to Interstate 95 (I-95)/the George Washington Bridge entrance. I-95 is a common sense boundary and the district lines should not go further north than I-95. Also to follow historic district lines and maintain the connections of communities of interest the district should also include the Jumel Mansion neighborhood.
3. The district boundaries for the 10th Councilmanic should include the total area north of I-95 including the wholly contained neighborhoods of Cabrini Heights and Inwood. For population purposes the district has to extend south of the common sense I-95 boundary. That extension should not crack in half the heart of Washington Heights' Dominican community at the I-95 boundary as the commission's plan suggests. Instead the area east of Fort Washington Avenue and west of Amsterdam Avenue down to 155th Street should be included in the 10th Councilmanic district.

I believe the districts should follow these boundaries because:

1. **THE UMED PLAN IS SIMPLE**

- This plan avoids gerrymandering by using the community districts as its base. These lines were established in 1975 and are universally recognized as community boundaries. Deviations from those boundaries were to adjust for population and were simple changes.
- The deviations either followed existing district lines as in the case of the Jumel Mansion Neighborhood or the Fort Washington Avenue extension or used very simple, long avenue boundaries. Examples would be the lengthy Madison and Lexington Avenues at to the east of the 9th and Amsterdam Avenue and Morningside Aves. between the 7th and 9th.

- Amsterdam Avenue is a simple, but important boundary between the 7th and 9th districts. Several transportation routes run along Amsterdam and it is the western demarcation of several neighborhoods like Hamilton Heights and Sugar Hill.
- Residents of the Upper West side between 96th and 110th Streets which had previously been split between three councilmanic districts would now be in one district, a significant concern raised in previous hearings.

2. THE UMED PLAN IS FAIR

- The plan doesn't just adhere to the provisions of the Voting Rights Act, but goes further to protect the ethnicities and nationalities that constitute the Upper Manhattan political mosaic.
- This plan recognizes the important nationality characteristic of Washington Heights. Looking beyond the Hispanic/Latino designation, its Dominican community was "cracked" in half by the Commission's first redistricting proposal. This plan summarily rejects that approach and reunites the Dominican community to the north and south of I-95 as it currently exists in Council District 10. This protects the voting strength of the Dominican Community in Council District 10 instead of diluting it.
- The plan recognizes the historic African American Community in Central Harlem and the Dominican Community in Washington Heights. Districts 9 and 10 reflect those historic communities, but the plan also recognizes the demographic changes of the community and its proposed district 7 evenly balances traditional ethnic communities with new resident ethnic communities for a district that is more evenly split than the Commission's plan which appeared to favor one ethnic minority over others.

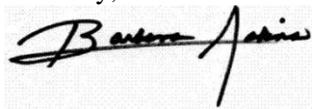
3. THE UMED PLAN IS BALANCED

- Many significant institutions remain wholly contained in single districts in this plan.
- The City College of New York maintains the Amsterdam Avenue boundary and is to its east. It would lie totally within the 9th Councilmanic District.
- One of the Upper Manhattan's largest institutions, Columbia University, with the exception of its athletic facilities, is wholly contained within one district. The current district has the university split across three districts.
- La Marqueta which would be split in the Commission's first proposal would now rest solely in the 8th Councilmanic district.
- The UMED Plan is good for 125th Street. There will be certain retail categories that fit in with 125th Street that can be successful. Those that complement arts, entertainment, and culture are of significant interest. It will further the work of the BID to bring a blend of neighborhood serving convenience goods and services combined with regional draw businesses that draw residents (national chains and local independents).
- The UMED Plan will have a positive impact for consumer demand. It has broad geographic appeal. It will not disrupt the high visitation rate from City residents and tourists from around the world, and it will enhance the expansion and opening of educational and cultural facilities. The UMED plan takes into

consideration the changing demographics in the market, increased wealth in the neighborhood, and acknowledges the increase diversity in the Harlem Community.

- The UMED Plan adequately addresses the Cultural Aspects of Harlem which has rich cultural assets including African American and Hispanic/Latino, Arts and entertainment facilities, and growing complementary retail businesses including eating and drinking as well as leisure retailers. It allows the community's economic goal of driving the commerce with cultural clusters to continue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara Askins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the letter "s".

Barbara Askins,
President & CEO
125th Street Business Improvement District