

**TESTIMONY OF BRIAN PAUL,
RESEARCH AND POLICY COORDINATOR, COMMON CAUSE/NY
BEFORE THE NYC DISTRICTING COMMISSION
JANUARY 7,TH MANHATTAN**

My name is Brian Paul and I'm the Research and Policy Coordinator at Common Cause/NY, a nonpartisan citizens' lobby and a leading force in the battle for honest and accountable government. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on City Council redistricting.

Before discussing the plan, we would like to take the opportunity to thank the Commission for the decision to hold a third round of public hearings. While there's no such thing as a perfect redistricting plan, additional public input and discussion is always beneficial and will undoubtedly lead to an improved final product. We'd also like to thank the Commission for posting full documentation, transcripts, and videos of all public hearings and meetings on its website.

Moving on to discussion of the plan, this hearing offers a valuable opportunity to present and discuss potential solutions to the issues raised during the October public hearings. In Manhattan, there were three major issues raised by numerous community testimonies – the division of Washington Heights between District 10 and District 7, the division of Manhattan Valley between District 7 and District 9, and the removal of many blocks of East Harlem and all of Randalls Island from District 8 in order to ensure a Bronx majority in the district.

Since that public hearing, the Commission has released a new plan. But only one of those three issues -- the division of Washington Heights -- was addressed by the new plan. Manhattan Valley is still divided between District 7 and 9, and only a few East Harlem blocks were added back to District 8.

Common Cause/NY has examined these issues in relation to the Commission's December plan. Attached to this testimony are maps demonstrating how Manhattan Valley can be kept whole within District 7 and East Harlem can be kept whole within District 8 by making relatively minor changes to the plan.

Manhattan Valley can be moved entirely into District 7 at a Hispanic voting age population percentage that is actually slightly higher (44.8% vs. 44.6%) than the Commission's December

plan by swapping the Sugar Hill area of Harlem (141st to 152nd along Convent Avenue) into District 9.

For District 8, as we presented at the October 4th Public Hearing, it is eminently possible to keep the current East Harlem borders intact and maintain Randall's Island while also increasing the Bronx share of the district and the Hispanic share of the district to nearly 60% Hispanic VAP.

It is also important to point out that the Commission's lines for District 8 as currently drawn would split three NYCHA developments – the Taft, Carver, and Lexington houses. The Commission has made careful efforts throughout the rest of the plan to avoid dividing NYCHA developments. In Brooklyn for example, Districts 36, 36, and 41 are carefully drawn to avoid dividing any of the dozens of NYCHA developments in these districts. The NYCHA developments of East Harlem should be afforded the same treatment, and the attached recommendation would keep the Taft, Carver, and Lexington houses all in District 8.

These recommended changes to the Commission plan in Upper Manhattan can be made while also improving district lines in the Bronx. In the current Commission proposal, neighborhoods like Van Nest, East Tremont, Claremont, and the Longwood Avenue area are awkwardly chopped up for reasons that are not clear. The lines in these districts can be improved to better follow neighborhoods and communities of interest with no adverse effect to minority representation.

Making the changes suggested in this testimony would also restore balance to the distribution of districts between Manhattan and the Bronx – the average deviation for Districts 1 through 10 would be +2.5% (instead of +4.1%) and the average deviation for Districts 11 through 18 would be +2.9% (instead of +0.7%).

The attached recommendations demonstrate that there is no demographic or legal impediment to satisfying the public's wishes to keep Manhattan Valley and East Harlem united within single districts.

As a final point, at the Commission's November meeting a discussion took place about whether it would be beneficial to move Central Park from District 8 to District 4 or 6 to better follow the Charter criteria on compactness. Common Cause/NY agrees that the park is a better fit in District 4 or 6 but has no position on which district would be the best fit.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today.

City Council – Manhattan-Bronx Suggested Changes to Dec. Draft

Brian Paul 01/03/13

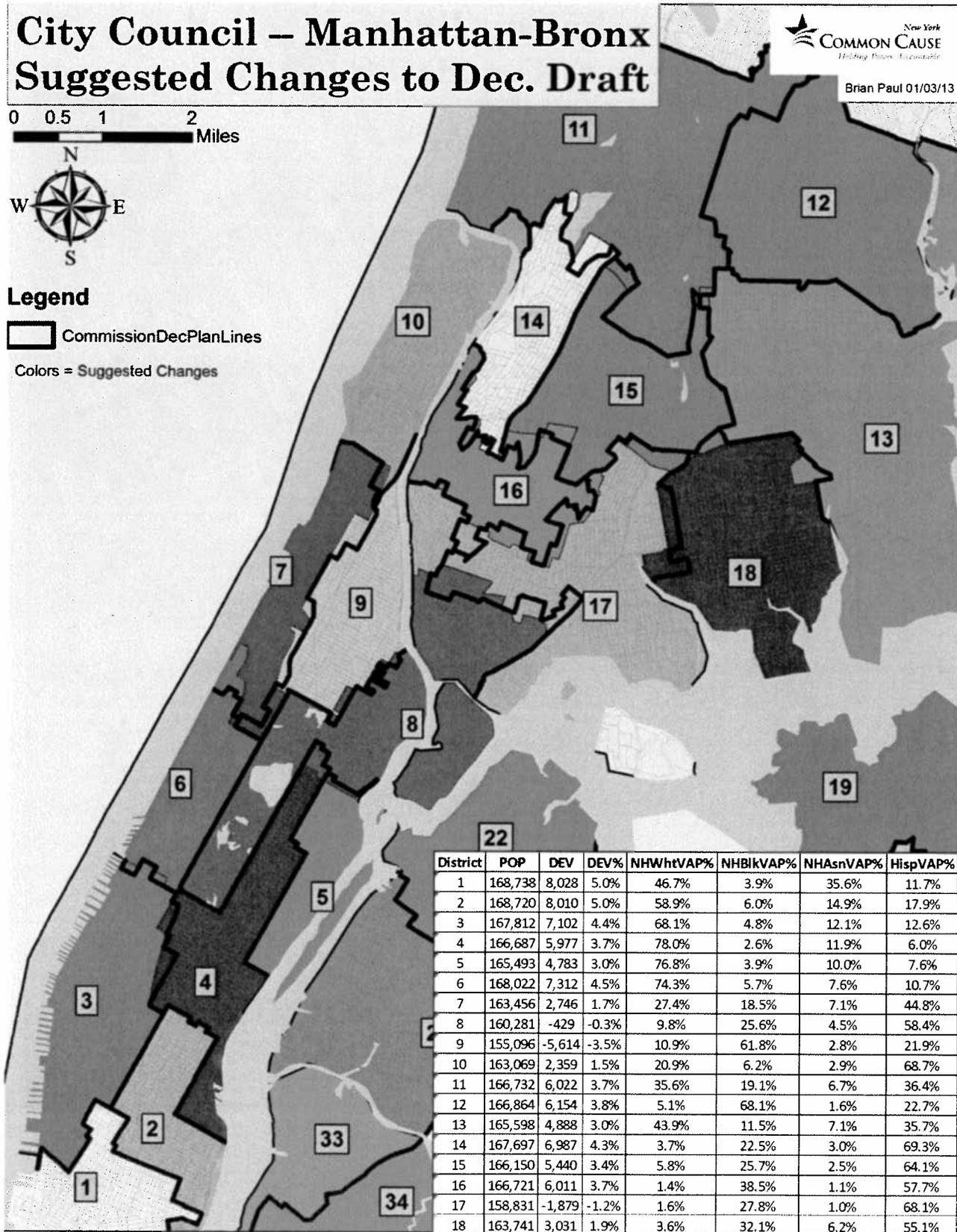
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Legend

CommissionDecPlanLines

Colors = Suggested Changes



District	POP	DEV	DEV%	NHWhtVAP%	NHBlkVAP%	NHAsnVAP%	HispVAP%
1	168,738	8,028	5.0%	46.7%	3.9%	35.6%	11.7%
2	168,720	8,010	5.0%	58.9%	6.0%	14.9%	17.9%
3	167,812	7,102	4.4%	68.1%	4.8%	12.1%	12.6%
4	166,687	5,977	3.7%	78.0%	2.6%	11.9%	6.0%
5	165,493	4,783	3.0%	76.8%	3.9%	10.0%	7.6%
6	168,022	7,312	4.5%	74.3%	5.7%	7.6%	10.7%
7	163,456	2,746	1.7%	27.4%	18.5%	7.1%	44.8%
8	160,281	-429	-0.3%	9.8%	25.6%	4.5%	58.4%
9	155,096	-5,614	-3.5%	10.9%	61.8%	2.8%	21.9%
10	163,069	2,359	1.5%	20.9%	6.2%	2.9%	68.7%
11	166,732	6,022	3.7%	35.6%	19.1%	6.7%	36.4%
12	166,864	6,154	3.8%	5.1%	68.1%	1.6%	22.7%
13	165,598	4,888	3.0%	43.9%	11.5%	7.1%	35.7%
14	167,697	6,987	4.3%	3.7%	22.5%	3.0%	69.3%
15	166,150	5,440	3.4%	5.8%	25.7%	2.5%	64.1%
16	166,721	6,011	3.7%	1.4%	38.5%	1.1%	57.7%
17	158,831	-1,879	-1.2%	1.6%	27.8%	1.0%	68.1%
18	163,741	3,031	1.9%	3.6%	32.1%	6.2%	55.1%

