



Keeping people in their homes and community, since 1977!

Good evening, my name is Damaris Reyes and I reside at 64 Baruch Drive—part of Baruch Houses—which is currently located in Councilmanic District 2. I am Executive Director of Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES), a neighborhood housing and preservation organization that has served the Lower East Side of Manhattan since 1977. I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony this evening.

As a lifelong resident of the Lower East Side—the geographic and literal home of Council District 2 for decades—I have a singular sense for the history, community, and the issues that permeate our district and encompass our shared communities. Every day, we work on the ground, building to building, on issues of shared concern to our residents. Based upon feedback from members of our community, I have two specific suggestions with respect to the latest map released by the Districting Commission on December 4th. Both proposals will ensure continuity of representation and unity of voice for the residents of the Lower East Side.

The 2003 Districting process made two changes to Council District 2 that fractured naturally contiguous communities of interest which should be rectified and reunited this time around. I am speaking specifically of the 2003-era action that split up Vladeck Houses and Gouverneur Gardens, shifting 4 Vladeck Buildings into Council District 1 (while leaving the remaining 20 in District 2) and adding two Gouverneur buildings to Council District 2 (while leaving the other four buildings in District 1). The newest version of the maps released in early December rightly return geographical and representational unity to the residents of Vladeck Houses by housing all 24 buildings in District 2. However, under the December 4th maps, the two Gouverneur buildings are still located in Council District 2. While the needs of Council Districts 1 and 2 overlap to a degree, the residents of these buildings deserve to speak with a unified voice to a single representative. As such, I respectfully request that the Commission reunify both Vladeck Houses and all of Gouverneur Gardens in Council Districts 2 and 1, respectively.

Secondly, the 2003 maps cut out an important 5 block radius that was located in Council District 2 for decades—stretching from Norfolk Street eastward to Pitt Street between East Houston and Stanton Street. This area has an exceptional amount in common with the rest of the Lower East Side portions of Council District 2. Given that the needs in this area are the same and that the area was historically home in Council District 2, I would respectfully submit that the Commission reunite and reunify this area within the confines of District 2.

As a longtime resident of the area with deep and abiding ties to the community, I urge the Districting Commission to make the above changes in the name of continuity, unity, and consistency of voice and representation.

I appreciate your consideration in this important matter.