

Testimony to the NYC Districting Commission
January 4, 2013

I request that the Commission revise its proposal to merge much of the existing Districts 7 and 10 in northern Manhattan.

The Commission ought to propose a new map that includes alternatives for northern Manhattan, such as extending Council District 10 north into the Bronx and leaving the existing District 7 largely intact.

The Commission has received written and oral testimony from residents who rejected its proposals for Council Districts 7 and 10. Yet, the Commission chose not to reflect such testimony in its December 4 map.

In fact, the only changes reflected in the December 4 map for northern Manhattan came directly from the October 4 testimony of northern Manhattan Councilmembers.

The Commission should be doing its work independently and not give deference to the preferences of individual Councilmembers. It is a violation of the New York City Charter Section 51a for Councilmembers to direct this work, which the Charter assigns to the Commission.

I believe that the December 4 map also violates the Voting Rights Act because it will reduce Black and Latino representation in Manhattan.

The existing District 7 is a proven coalition district, with a decades-long pattern of Whites voting for Latino and Black candidates, and of Blacks and Latinos supporting White candidates.

District 7 as it is now configured exemplifies the dream that inspired the Voting Rights Act—it is a district where a candidate of any race can credibly run and get elected.

I don't know why the Commission and our northern Manhattan Councilmembers seem so determined to destroy it. I urge the Commission to leave District 7 intact.



DEBNA

Duke Ellington Boulevard Neighborhood Association

West 106th Street

P. O. BOX 207 Cathedral Station

New York, New York 10025

December 30, 2012

Honorable Speaker Christine Quinn
New York City Council
250 Broadway Suite 1856
New York, New York 10007

Dear Speaker Quinn:

As members of the Duke Ellington Boulevard Neighborhood Association (DEBNA) in Manhattan Valley, we applaud your efforts to secure a better redistricting for the City Council.

The current proposal splits Manhattan Valley, a vibrant integrated community of the Upper West Side, into two parts for the first time in its history. This split will weaken the community's ability to represent itself and advocate for its needs and has the effect of diluting Latino strength in both Manhattan Valley and East Harlem. .

Just as appalling is the Commission's decision to append the split parts of Manhattan Valley to Council districts in Central and West Harlem (7 & 9) which districts have absolutely no rapport or history with DEBNA or Manhattan Valley.

Manhattan Valley will lose its voice and identity in full violation of the Voting Rights Act's imperative to sustain community integrity. Meanwhile, two non-Latino communities to the north and south of us (Park West Village and Columbia University) were re-unified in the Districting Commission's final plan. Why not Manhattan Valley?

Last but not least, the current plan robs us of the right to vote again for Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito who knows our issues and has worked diligently to protect our community.

Please join our protest to your own in the effort to achieve a more equitable plan of representation for Manhattan Valley along with New York City as a whole.

Sincerely,

Glory Ann Kerstein
President, DEBNA
gloryny@aol.com

Martina Garcia
Vice-President, DEBNA
martina30sun@yahoo.com

pc: Benito Romano, NYC Districting Commission Chair
Melissa Mark-Viverito, NYC Council Member – District 8
Scott Stringer, Manhattan Borough President
Karl Porter, President – North West Central Park Multi-Block Association
Willie Gonzalez, President – Maria Trinidad Sanchez/W 109 Association
Bruce James, President – W 108 St. Block Association
Kathy Lanoix, President – W 107 St. Block Association
Lou Ludney, West 104 Community Garden
Mark Diller, Chair – Manhattan Community Board 7
Penny Ryan, District Manager - Manhattan Community Board 7

Hearings

From: Laura Saxon [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, January 12, 2013 9:36 PM
To: Hearings
Subject: I just signed "New York City Districting Commission: Do not change the NYC councilmanic boundary lines for Northern Manhattan."

Dear New York City Districting Commission (<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dc/html/submit/submit.shtml>),

I just signed julius tajiddin's petition "[New York City Districting Commission: Do not change the NYC councilmanic boundary lines for Northern Manhattan.](#)" on Change.org.

Do not change the NYC councilmanic boundary lines for Northern Manhattan. The African American citizen voting-age population would be greatly diminished in the 7th Council District under this proposed map and the shift of political influence would be given to a white citizen voting-age population. The Upper Manhattan Empowerment District's proposed map offered as an alternative is even worse. The latter seems to create a special district for Columbia University whereas Columbia University would be the epicenter. Both plans would put Columbia University under the auspices of a majority white population which on its face would be preferable to Columbia University considering the history between Columbia and the African American Community in Harlem. It would also leave two public housing developments in the 7th District, Grant Houses and Manhattanville Houses, largely occupied by African Americans, vulnerable to predators. It is a commonly known fact that these two developments have been considered for some sort of privatization plan. However, African Americans are the majority citizen voting-age population in all of Harlem. There are approximately 60,000 African Americans in West Harlem, 52,000 Dominicans and 33,000 whites. In all of the 7th District the African American population is 37%. The Dominican percentage is 47% and the white population is 15%. Although the Dominican population in the entire 7th District is the majority population the Dominican citizen voting-age population does not have the majority. Having an African American representing the 7th District in city council for 3 terms, coupled with the total African American population in the 7th District, is evidence that the African American "minority" population is significant in this district if not self determining and is a protected group under the Voting Rights Act. To reduce the African American population to 17% (both proposed maps) putting such group at the bottom of the top three ethnic groups by drawing into the 7th District a white neighborhood, carving a large percentage of the Black population in West Harlem out of the 7th District and putting them into the 9th District and cutting out African American neighborhoods in Lower Washington Heights is gerrymandering at its best. Furthermore, these new boundary lines seem to purposely carve out the residences of potential African American candidates for the 7th Council District in the 2013 councilmanic race, which will be open in 2013. Particularly, one of the candidates ran in 2009 and there is a logical inclination that he would run again, especially since the council seat will be opened in 2013. Therefore we ask that the Commission preserve the majority "minority" voting power that is already in place in the 7th District. Altering other Upper Manhattan Districts to compensate for an unequal district population because of population shifts at the expense of the "minority" voting power in the 7th District is not fair. Those districts do not lose their actual "minority" voting power. The 7th District meets all of the criteria to preserve its "minority" voting power population under Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act and such proposed maps violate both Sections 2 and 5 of the Voting Rights Act.

Sincerely,
Laura Saxon morriston, Florida

There are now 30 signatures on this petition. Read reasons why people are signing, and respond to julius tajiddin by clicking here:

<http://www.change.org/petitions/new-york-city-districting-commission-do-not-change-the-nyc-councilmanic-boundary-lines-for-northern-manhattan?response=9b5d2c21a96b>



Mailing address: Change.org, 216 West 104th Street, Suite #130, New York, NY 10025. USA

Maria Schoenhammer
518 West 142nd Street, Apt. 2
New York, NY 10031

NYC Districting Commission
Attn: Jonathan Ettricks
253 Broadway, 7th Fl.
New York, NY 10007

Comments for Hearing on January 7th, Hunter College

Esteemed Members of the Redistricting Committee, Esteemed City Council
Members,

I have been a resident of West Harlem for almost 14 years. I am asking you to reject the revised district map of Dec. 4, 2012. The newly proposed District 7, extending roughly from 165th to as far south as 100th Street does not represent the community I live in. It is obvious to anyone who walks from 100th Street to 165th Street that there are two distinctly different neighborhoods to the South and to the North of 125th Street, which, situated in the dip of Manhattan Valley, is the natural topographical as well as the historic border of Harlem. The community to the North, West Harlem, traditionally has been African-American, with a large influx of Hispanics and a growing minority of Whites and Asians. The area to the South of 125th Street shares neither our history, our demographic profile, nor the concerns that we bring to our political representatives. We have so much in common with Central Harlem to the East and with Washington Heights to the North that the borders to these communities are blurry and shifting. While not perfect, the current district 7, extending all the way to Inwood, represents us better in terms of demographics and in terms of similar concerns than the newly proposed district 7 which includes parts of the Upper West Side—an area that is very different from us in terms of demographics and interests.

The ongoing expansion of the campus of Columbia University encompassing the area between 125th and 134nd Street will have an enormous impact on the

surrounding West Harlem community. Historically, the relations between Columbia and Harlem have been strained and the current expansion plans have been met with great resistance by the community. Columbia assuaged us with promises of jobs, overall economic stimulation, social services etc. and has tried to project the image of a “good neighbor”. How will we hold Columbia to their promises when our community of interest is scattered over several council districts? In the proposed District 7, financial power and political might would be concentrated in the southern end that does not share our concerns. In such a district, it will be very difficult to elect minority candidates who come from our own community and who understand and share our concerns.

The revised district map of Dec. 4, 2012 eviscerates the community of West Harlem and disempowers its residents. It is in violation of the New York City Charter § 52.b and 52.c which states that “District lines shall keep intact neighborhoods and communities with established ties of common interest and association, whether historical, racial, economic, ethnic, religious or other.” Creating a district that divides West Harlem and separates it from areas to the North and East with which it forms a community of interest violates the City Charter as well as the Voting Rights Act. I am asking you to reject this map.

While the proposed District 7 breaks up our community of interest, it unites at its center, the existing campus of Columbia University (from 111th to 122nd Street, previously in district 9) with the so-called Columbia Expansion (from 125th to 134th Street), currently under construction, thereby creating a behemoth of power surrounded by communities to the North and South that have little in common in terms of demographics and interests. Creating a district that concentrates power in such a manner while at the same time stripping power from of a community of interest is in violation of the Voting Rights Act.

I urge you to go back to the drawing board and create a district 7 in which residents can make their interests heard and become involved in the democratic process rather than use redistricting to create accumulations of power.

From: [Richard Robbins](#)
To: [Ettricks, Jonathan](#)
Subject: Redistricting
Date: Wednesday, January 09, 2013 4:00:58 PM

Jonathan -

I just saw a copy of the proposed redistricting and I strongly support moving my block (West 103rd Street between West End and Riverside) from District 7 to District 6 as it currently appears on the <http://209.156.236.68/dist/nycdistricting.html> website.

Thanks!!

Rich

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Richard Robbins
(646) [REDACTED]
[@rich1](#)

Hearings

From: siobhan dolan <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, January 07, 2013 1:18 AM
To: Hearings
Cc: kerstein glory
Subject: re-districting of Manhattan Valley

To NYC Districting Commission Members,

As a resident of Manhattan Valley for close to 30 years, I am recently dismayed to learn that re-districting lines have been proposed that would seriously "chop up" this community. Over the years I have had

the opportunity to meet and work with concerned neighbors through my neighborhood association - The Duke Ellington Boulevard Neighborhood Association (DEBNA) - willing to address the serious issues we have

mutually faced as residents of Manhattan Valley. There is a commonality of experience understanding the effects the plight of drugs has had on one neighborhood, as well as the detrimental effects of drug gang bullets

wounding the innocent. On this count, and so many others, we have a rich history of working together with each other, and reaching out to our local supports - the 24th Police Precinct, our City Council Representative - Mellissa

Mark-Viverito, and in years past, Phil Reid, and also Community Board 7.

Manhattan Valley is known by all as a very specific and discrete neighborhood, one with many successes over the years, especially regarding the present level of safety compared to the past, which was brought about by the

expanse of Manhattan Valley neighbors willing to get involved. There is still so much to continue to address in our neighborhood. The relationships that have developed in the process of strengthening our Manhattan Valley

neighborhood have also progressed.

Our City Council Representative, Ms. Mark-Viverito has attended our neighborhood association meetings many times to listen and respond to our concerns. I am confident and assured of her representation as our City

Council Member, as she has come to know our issues well.

It is perplexing to me that when something is working effectively, it is being considered to change. To my mind, this would be a mistake, to disrupt the unified voice of Manhattan Valley, and to lose Ms. Mark-Viverito. So,

I implore you to reconsider the plan to re-district Manhattan Valley.

Regards,

Siobhan Joan Dolan
[REDACTED]

NY NY 10025