



**Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)
Asian American Communities of Interest Survey in New York City
submitted to LATFOR
at the Public Hearing, September 21, 2011
250 Broadway, New York City**

The Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, founded in 1974, has defended the voting rights of Asian Americans through litigation, legal advocacy and community education.

AALDEF submits this Asian American Communities of Interest Survey in connection with the redistricting hearings conducted by LATFOR in New York City. This survey, utilized in combination with the Asian American Neighborhood Boundaries, submitted to LATFOR at the September 7, 2011 public hearing in Queens, supplies LATFOR with the necessary tools to ensure that Asian American communities of interest will not be unfairly divided.

Asian Americans in New York City

Asian Americans are the fastest growing racial group in New York City. In New York City, the Asian American population has increased 32% over the past decade and now constitutes almost 13% of the city's population, numbering 1,028,119¹. Seven out of ten Asian New Yorkers reside in three New York City boroughs: Queens, Manhattan and Brooklyn.

CENSUS 2010	Total Population	Asian Population	Asian Percent of Total	Total Growth Since 2000	Asian Growth Since 2000
New York State	19,378,102	1,406,194	7.3%	2.1%	35.7%
New York City	8,175,133	1,028,119	12.6%	2.1%	31.8%
- Queens	2,230,722	508,334	22.8%	0.1 %	30.6%
- Manhattan	1,585,873	177,624	11.2%	3.2%	24.0%
- Brooklyn	2,504,700	260,129	10.4%	1.6%	41.2%

* Only includes those who checked "Asian" and no other race².

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 and 2000 Census.

² This "Not Hispanic Asian alone" number should be taken as the bare minimum number of Asian Americans. In the 2000 and 2010 censuses, respondents were allowed to mark more than one race, yielding a race concept known as "alone or in combination," which includes people who reported a single race alone (e.g., Asian) and people who reported that race in combination with one or more of the other race groups (i.e., White, Black or African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and Some Other Race). In addition, race and ethnicity are considered separate and distinct identities, with Hispanic or Latino origin asked as a separate question. This means that all respondents are also categorized as either "Hispanic or Latino" and "Not Hispanic or Latino." Therefore, a more accurate and inclusive estimate of Asian Americans would be to aggregate both the Hispanic and Not Hispanic Asian alone or in combination populations (e.g., the maximum number of Asian

Asian American populations have increased faster than the overall growth rate of the boroughs in which they reside. In Queens, Asian Americans have grown 306 times faster than the overall rate of the borough, and in Manhattan and Brooklyn, 7.5 and 25.75 times faster, respectively. Of all the municipalities in the nation, New York has the largest Asian American population. However, no Asian American has ever been elected to the State Senate or Congress, even though Asian Americans comprise 13% of the City's population.

Severe Underrepresentation of Asian Americans

Despite having the fastest growth rate of any racial group in New York City over the past decade, Asian Americans continue to be woefully underrepresented in New York State. Currently, there is only one Asian American representative in the State Assembly, and no Asian American representative in the State Senate. One need only look at the State Assembly and Senate district boundaries of Flushing, Queens to understand why. When communities of common interest are kept together, Asian Americans can elect a candidate of their choice, such as in State Assembly District 22. State Senate Districts 11 and 16 run straight down the middle of Flushing and divide the community in half, diluting Asian American voting strength. This Task Force should eliminate all legislative district configurations that divide communities of common interest and ensure that these communities are kept together in new districts.

As detailed below, and in the attached Asian American Neighborhood Maps, pp. 20-22, Asian American communities of interest and neighborhoods are currently unfairly divided among numerous legislative districts on all levels. Since Asian Americans are a protected minority group under the federal Voting Rights Act, districts must be drawn so that Asian Americans can elect candidates of their choice. While the United States Supreme Court has held that the consideration of race may not "predominate" in the redistricting process, the court has also held that a paramount districting criterion is to include "communities of interest" in districts³. While the court has defined this concept as groupings of people with "actual shared interests," social scientists have found communities of interest to exist when individuals share significant cultural, economic, political, and social ties⁴.

Here in New York, the federal court in *Diaz v. Silver*, 978 F. Supp. 96 (E.D.N.Y.) (*per curiam*), *aff'd*, 522 U.S. 801 (1997) recognized that Asian Americans in Manhattan's Chinatown and Brooklyn's Sunset Park were a community of interest that should be kept together within the 12th Congressional District. The court specifically recognized the following factors and shared community concerns:

Americans citywide should actually be reflected as 1,134,919 or 13.9% of the total NYC population).

³ *Miller v. Johnson*, 515 U.S. 900 (1995).

⁴ AALDEF Community Survey Project, Executive Summary, p. 1, "Asian Neighborhoods in New York City: Locating Boundaries and Common Interests", Professor Tarry Hum, Ph.D., Department of Urban Studies, Queens College/City University of New York, 2002. See aaldef.org/docs/Asian-Neighborhoods-in-NYC%282002%29.pdf.

- Cultural background
- Economic status
- Common media markets
- Shared community services and organizations, including health clinics, stores, public transportation and workplaces
- Voting patterns
- Common languages and dialects
- Common country of origin

Several Asian American communities throughout New York City share common concerns and socioeconomic characteristics, but they have been divided between two or more districts. We urge this Task Force to take a closer look at these neighborhoods and ensure that Asian American communities are kept together and not splintered among newly-drawn districts.

AALDEF's Survey

AALDEF met with community groups all over New York City, specifically where Asian Americans have clustered in many of the neighborhoods experiencing the fastest growth. AALDEF asked the community groups to draw their neighborhood boundaries on a map, as defined by their community. After meeting with multiple groups from a neighborhood, we conducted follow up meetings with the groups to come to an agreement on final neighborhood boundaries that all of the groups agreed upon.

We also asked the groups about the most common concerns and issues in their neighborhoods. Many of the communities we met with had concerns regarding immigration, language assistance, social services, health care and workers' rights. These shared concerns centered on daily neighborhood quality issues as well as neighborhood institutions that provide opportunities for education, employment, social services, immigrant rights, and economic justice.

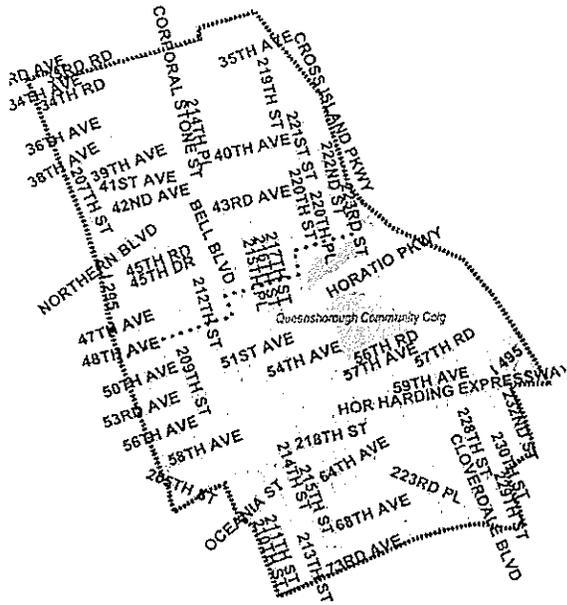
Finally, we asked groups to identify the surrounding neighborhoods that were most similar and the most different to their neighborhood.

AALDEF interviewed numerous community groups, listed in the attached addendum, in the following Asian American neighborhoods:

Queens

- Flushing
- Bayside
- Elmhurst
- Jackson Heights
- Woodside
- Floral Park/Queens Village/Bellerose/Glenn Oaks

Bayside



Current Legislative Districts: This community-defined area is currently divided between AD24 and AD26; SD16 and SD11; and CD9 and CD5.

Language: Flushing and Bayside are largely populated with Chinese Americans, with a substantial Korean American population. Flushing is home to newly arriving immigrants. Most of the newly arriving Chinese immigrants are a mix of Mandarin and Cantonese speakers and are limited English proficient. These immigrant populations require language assistance and services for young children.

Housing: Many Asian Americans work in Flushing and reside in Bayside. Recent

immigrants first settle in Flushing and rent apartments, and then “move up” to Bayside, Little Neck, Douglaston or Great Neck. Once they save enough money, they seek to move to the east and to the north. Property values tend to increase as you move northeast into Long Island, traveling from west to east along Northern Boulevard.

There has been a significant increase in development in Flushing, with developers building taller and larger buildings.

Employment: Residents in Flushing live and work in Flushing, while many residents in Bayside live in Bayside and work in Flushing, or some other neighborhood outside of Bayside. In the adjacent neighborhood of Elmhurst, most people only reside there, but they usually work outside of Elmhurst, similar to Bayside.

Transportation: Northern Boulevard is the major thoroughfare that connects the neighborhoods of Flushing, Bayside, Little Neck, Douglaston and Great Neck. The Asian American community has settled along this road and maintains a local link to Flushing, the cultural heart of the community, by residing in neighborhoods that are situated along Northern Boulevard, starting from Flushing in the west and expanding eastward into Long Island to Great Neck in the east. Using this local road, Asian Americans return to Flushing for religious purposes (the largest Korean church in New York is in Flushing), shopping, ethnic restaurants and culture.

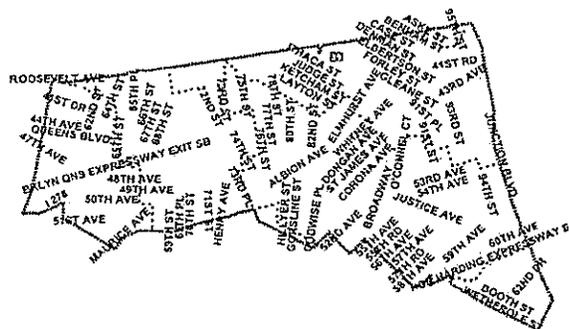
Many residents rely on public transportation, including the 7 train subway line.

Concerns/Needs: The major roads, such as Main Street, are very congested with limited parking available. Many storeowners complain that there is not enough parking for their customers.

Flushing and Bayside residents shared similar needs and concerns in neighborhood quality (e.g., population growth and sanitation), public safety (e.g., perceived targeting of Asian crime victims), quality education, affordable housing and overcrowded apartments, and immigrant issues (e.g., acculturation and access to social services). The more affluent and residential neighborhoods of Bay Terrace, Whitestone, and Beechhurst have significantly different needs and common interests and should not be grouped together into the same legislative district as Flushing and Bayside.

Racial Tensions: Charges of anti-Asian slurs and harassment were made in the 2009 City Council race in District 19, which includes the neighborhoods of Bayside, Bayside Hills and Bay Terrace. Korean American candidate Kevin Kim, a Democrat, complained that white residents supporting Republican candidate Daniel Halloran made racial slurs, vandalized campaign signs, and assaulted two Korean American volunteers. For example, in Bay Terrace, starting at 33rd Road and going north to 26th Avenue on Bell Boulevard, Korean American campaign volunteers were berated with by white youths shouting racial slurs and saying, “You all people don’t belong here!” Bay Terrace is different from Bayside, and the two neighborhoods should not be grouped together into the same legislative district.

Elmhurst (Attachment p. 5)



Current Legislative Districts: This community-defined area is currently divided among AD30, AD34, AD35, AD39 and AD29; SD12, SD16, SD13 and SD15; and CD7, CD5, CD9 and CD12.

Language: Elmhurst is home to a large Asian American and Latino population. There are many young families with small children.

Housing: Elmhurst is mostly residential, with low-rise buildings. Many Asian Americans rent apartments because they cannot afford to buy a co-operative unit or a condominium.

Employment: Many South Asians work in the construction industry or drive taxicabs. Most residents do not work in the neighborhood.

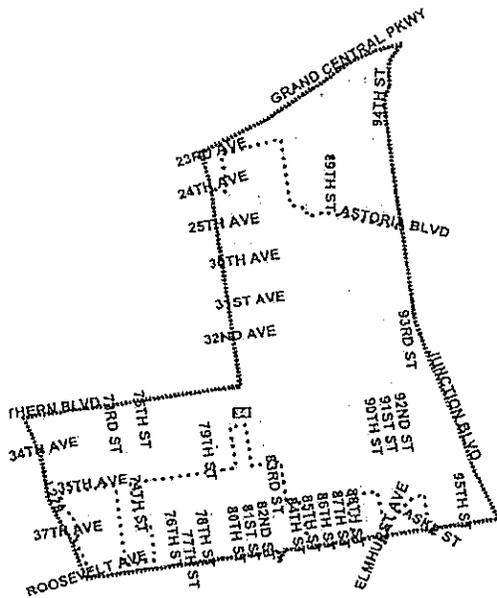
Transportation: Residents rely on public transportation, including the E., F, M, R and 7 train subway lines.

Education: Many Asian American youth attend Newtown High School in the neighborhood. Many residents would prefer to send their children to a specialized school, since this local public school is overcrowded.

Concerns/Needs: Many residents do not have health insurance and use the Elmhurst Hospital emergency room for their medical needs, waiting for hours due to the overcrowded conditions. Residents are concerned about quality education, access to health care, public safety, sanitation and overpopulation, employment opportunities, and immigrant issues, such as language difficulties and need for immigrant services.

The neighborhoods of Jackson Heights and Woodside are similar to Elmhurst and should be grouped together into the same legislative district if possible. The neighborhoods of Maspeth and Middle Village are vastly different from Elmhurst and should not be grouped together with Elmhurst.

Jackson Heights (Attachment p. 6)



Current Legislative Districts: This community-defined area is currently divided among AD34, AD39 and AD35; SD13; and CD 7 and CD5.

Language: Jackson Heights is a diverse neighborhood of mostly South Asian, Latino and White residents. Many of the residents are limited English proficient and require some form of language assistance. Although Spanish language interpreters are typically available, many South Asian residents have limited access to interpreters and face greater difficulties in applying for government entitlements.

Housing: Many of the South Asian residents are Bangladeshi and Nepali immigrants who rent apartments or homes, while many of the White and

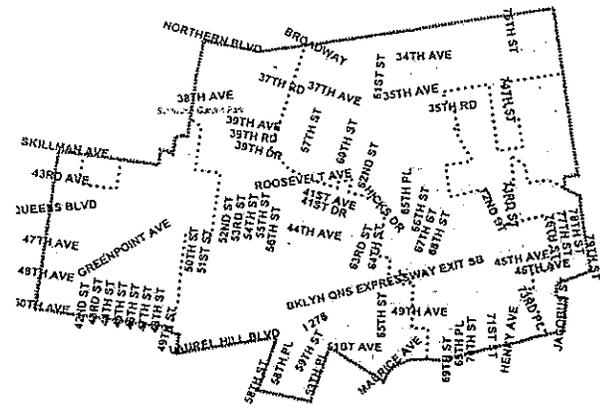
Latino residents are home owners. There is a mix of single men sharing living spaces and many extended families with young children in the neighborhood.

Employment: Many residents do not work in Jackson Heights, but rather work in locations throughout New York City.

Concerns/Needs: There is a lack of green space and recreational facilities, high traffic congestion, not enough parking spaces, overcrowding and congestion, and inadequate infrastructure to accommodate the growing population.

Similar surrounding neighborhoods include Elmhurst and Woodside, based on the shared socio-economic status of the residents and need for language assistance.

Woodside (Attachment p. 7)



Current Legislative Districts: This community-defined area is currently divided among AD30, AD34, AD35, AD37, and AD39; SD12, SD13, SD15, and SD16; and CD7, CD12, and CD14.

Language: Woodside is home to a diverse population comprised of Nepali, Korean, Filipino and Bangladeshi Americans. Many immigrants are limited English proficient and in need of language assistance. Many in the

community receive their news and information from ethnic print and online media.

Housing: The majority of residents rent apartments or homes, and some are beginning to purchase homes. Woodside is more of a residential neighborhood.

Employment: Most Asian American residents work in Manhattan and New Jersey, working in nail salons, restaurants, and construction, driving taxicabs, and employed as domestic workers and entrepreneurs. They shop mostly in Jackson Heights. Some domestic workers have been in Elmhurst for many years but are still not “established,” since many are given room and board and not paid compensation.

Transportation: Most residents rely on public transportation including the 7, E, F and R train subway lines and the Q32, Q18 and Q45 buses. Domestic workers rely on the Long Island Railroad, Woodside 61st Street station, to travel to Long Island, Westchester, Connecticut or New Jersey.

Education: The children attend public schools, P.S. 12 and P.S. 11.

Concerns/Needs: Many of the residents share common interests, including: immigration issues, workers' rights, lack of information about legal rights, need for assistance in applying for public benefits and securing health care. Most residents do not have health insurance and must rely on the already overcrowded Elmhurst Hospital emergency room for their medical needs. Many workers do not receive paid days off and cannot afford to take any days off.

The surrounding neighborhoods that are most similar to Woodside are Elmhurst and Jackson Heights. Elmhurst is most similar to Woodside, with Asian American community groups serving residents from both neighborhoods. Woodside residents also use Elmhurst Hospital, and both neighborhoods have high numbers of uninsured residents. Residents often move between Woodside and Elmhurst, using the 7 train subway line. The neighborhoods also share common

places of worship, such as the Hindu Temple on Woodside Avenue and 76th Street. Elmhurst and Jackson Heights should be grouped together into one legislative district if possible. By contrast, the neighborhood of Maspeth is distinctly different from Woodside, in that it lacks diversity and does not share common issues, such as need for language assistance or immigrant issues.

Bellerose/Floral Park/Queens Village/Glen Oaks (Attachment p. 8)



Current Legislative Districts: This community-defined area is currently divided among AD26, AD 24 and AD33; SD11; and CD5 and CD6.

Language: There is a large concentration of South Asian residents in this community.

Housing: Most of the residents are homeowners. They are opposed to downzoning and want to be able to rebuild and renovate their homes to a larger size.

Employment: Many of the men work in civil service for the United States Post Office or Metropolitan Transportation Authority, while many of the women work in health care, mainly as nurses. Residents moved to these

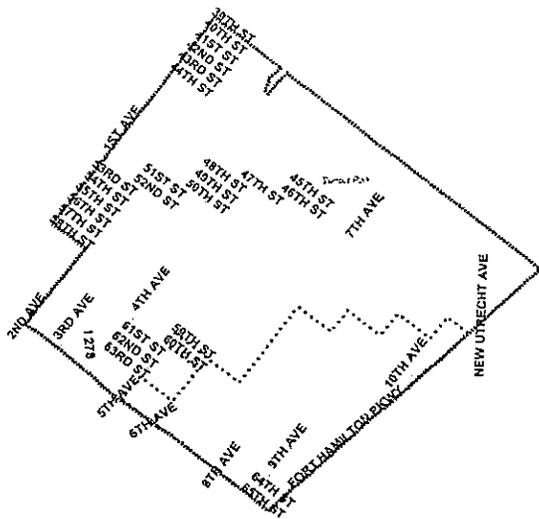
neighborhoods in part because of the proximity to local hospitals, including Long Island Jewish Hospital, North Shore University Hospital, Winthrop Hospital, and Parker Jewish Nursing Home.

Transportation: Residents rely on public transportation, including the F train subway line and Express Bus service, many of which run along Union Turnpike.

Concerns/Needs: The neighborhoods of Bellerose, Floral Park, Queens Village, and Glen Oaks share many common interests and should be considered as one community that should not be divided.

Neighborhoods that are distinctly different from this community include Hollis, St. Albans, and Springfield Gardens.

Sunset Park (Attachment p. 14)



Current Legislative Districts: This community-defined area is currently divided among AD49 and AD51; SD23, SD20 and SD18; and CD12 and CD8.

Language: Sunset Park is home to a largely Chinese and Latino population, with a South Asian population as well. The Chinese population in Sunset Park used to be predominantly Cantonese-speakers, but a large number of the Cantonese-speaking population is moving into the more residential neighborhoods of Bensonhurst, Bay Ridge and Sheepshead Bay. A new wave of

Fujianese-speaking Chinese residents is moving into the neighborhood, mainly along Eighth Avenue. Many of these Fujianese-speakers are new Chinese immigrants. On Fifty-Sixth Street between Sixth and Fifth Avenue, there is a large South Asian population. A new mosque was recently built on Fifty Third Street and Third Avenue. The Latino population is comprised of mostly Puerto Rican and Dominican residents who reside along Second and Third Avenue.

Housing: Many of the residents are young, have small children, and live in subdivided housing.

Employment: Many of the residents are working class and not professionals.

Transportation: Many of the new Fujianese immigrants are moving into residences along the D and N train subway lines.

Similar surrounding neighborhoods include Bensonhurst, Bay Ridge and Sheepshead Bay. Borough Park is distinctly different from Sunset Park in terms of socio-economic status, employment, and culture.

Bensonhurst (Attachment p. 15)



Current Legislative Districts: The community-defined area is currently divided among AD49, AD47 and AD46; SD22, SD23, SD27 and SD21; and CD13 and CD8.

Language: Bensonhurst and Bay Ridge have a large Chinese American population that speaks Mandarin. Many of the Chinese Americans in Bensonhurst, especially the senior citizens, are limited English proficient. Many senior citizens

are eligible for government entitlements, but cannot understand and fill out the forms and lack access to Chinese interpreters.

Employment: Manhattan's Chinatown used to be home to numerous garment factories that employed Chinese Americans living in Brooklyn. After 9/11 and the declining economy, many Chinatown garment factories closed. Chinese Americans in Bensonhurst have found employment in other industries: domestic workers/home care, supermarkets and grocery stores, laundromats, and Chinese restaurants. Since many Chinese Americans in Bensonhurst are limited English proficient, they are often relegated to low-wage jobs that do not require English proficiency. Many of the senior citizens stay at home to watch the grandchildren during the day, while the parents are at work.

Education: Bensonhurst has many high schools, including John Dewey High School, which offers bilingual education programs. Sunset Park does not have any high schools.

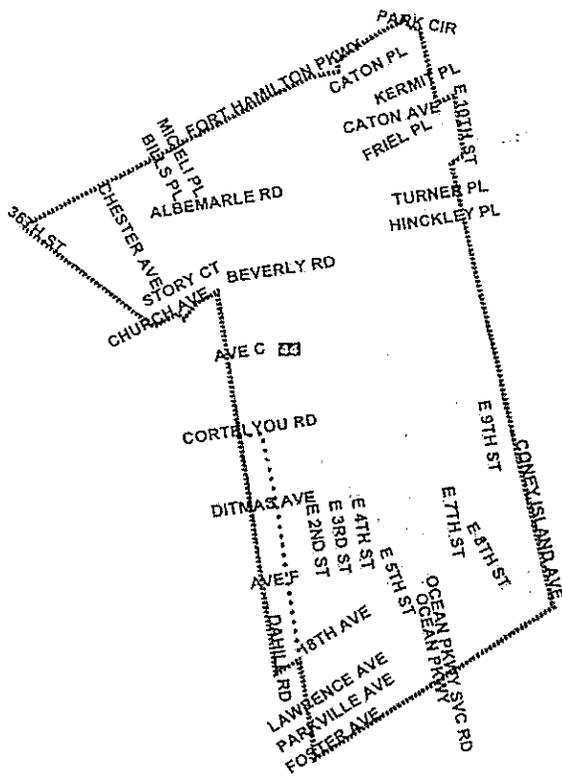
Concerns/Needs: There are many senior citizens as well as young children. Affordable day care for children is a major concern. There are no pre-kindergarten classes, and private day care is very expensive.

Other immigrant communities from Mexico and Russia share the same values as Chinese immigrants: they are hard working, have low-paying jobs, and want a good education for their children.

The neighborhoods of Bensonhurst, Bay Ridge and Sunset Park are very similar, share many common interests and should be grouped together into the same legislative district if possible. In the neighborhood of Sheepshead Bay, the Chinese American population has been established for twenty to thirty years, and many residents are retired. The Chinese American population is converging in Bensonhurst, Bay Ridge and Sunset Park.

By contrast, Borough Park, Brighton Beach, Coney Island, and Sea Gate are vastly different neighborhoods that share little in common with Bensonhurst, and should not be included in a legislative district with Bensonhurst.

Kensington (Attachment p. 17)



Current Legislative Districts: The community-defined area is currently divided between AD44; SD20 and SD21; and CD11 and CD9.

Language: Kensington is home to large Asian, African and Latino immigrant populations. The South Asian population is comprised mostly of Bangladeshi Americans.

Housing: Most residents own their homes, which are mostly multi-family houses.

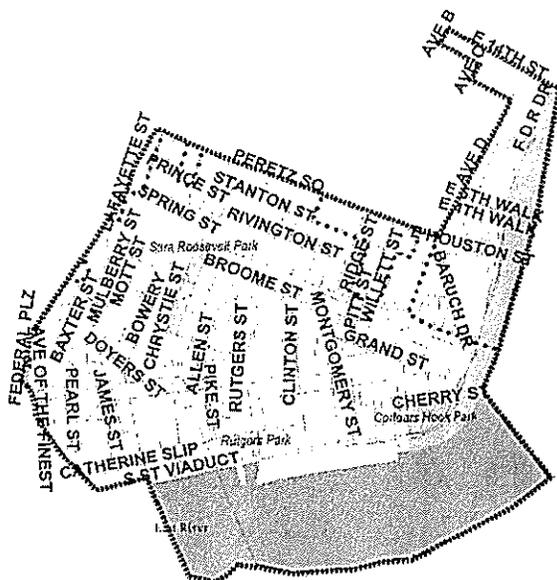
Employment: Many of the residents work outside of the neighborhood, mostly in Manhattan. Most of the South Asian men work in construction or are entrepreneurs, while the women work mostly in service industries, as restaurant workers, babysitters or school teachers.

Transportation: Most people rely on public transportation, including the F and G train

subway lines, and the B35, B67, B69, B103, B68, B63, B16, B11, B70 and B25 buses.

Education: Most children attend school in the neighborhood, at P.S. 230, P.S. 179, P.S. 216, I.S. 220 or Franklin Delano Roosevelt High School.

Chinatown/Lower East Side (Attachment p. 19)



Current Legislative Districts: The community-defined area of Chinatown/Lower East Side is currently divided between AD64; SD25; and CD12 (with Sunset Park), CD14 and CD8.

Many residents in Chinatown and the Lower East Side are foreign born. Because these recent immigrants are limited English proficient, they often encounter language barriers in education, employment, and access to government entitlements.

Chinatown and the Lower East Side share many similar demographic characteristics. Conversely, these two neighborhoods are demographically very different from Tribeca, Soho, Battery Park City, and the Financial District. Because of common socioeconomic characteristics, Chinatown and the Lower East Side should be kept in the same legislative district.

Chinatown

Language: Many residents are limited English proficient, rely on Chinese-language media, and need language assistance. They use bilingual forms to apply for government entitlements, rely on Chinese-speaking doctors or interpreters in seeking medical treatment at hospitals and local health clinics, and use bilingual ballots and interpreters in exercising their right to vote.

Housing: Many Chinatown residents live in aging tenement buildings and in public housing, which makes Chinatown one of the few remaining working-class neighborhoods in New York City. Many new hotels and market-rate condominiums have accelerated gentrification in this historically immigrant neighborhood.

Employment: Many residents live in the neighborhood and work in local bakeries, restaurants, retail stores, nail salons, as home health care attendants, in construction and as delivery truck drivers. Some residents travel to Sunset Park, Brooklyn and to Queens, performing similar work.

Transportation: Residents depend on public transportation, including the 6, B, Q, D, N, R, and F train subway lines, as well as the M15 and M22 buses.

Education: Many public schools in Chinatown are overcrowded. The Shuang Wen Academy was the first dual Chinese language/dual culture school, located at P.S. 184, and several high schools offer bilingual and English as a Second Language programs.

Concerns/Needs: Historically, Chinatown residents have organized around several common issues, including opposition to police brutality, budget cuts to city services, the White Street detention center, the Special Manhattan Bridge District rezoning, and restrictive immigration laws. They have supported rent control laws, language access to government services, better enforcement of labor laws for low-wage workers, and the reopening of Park Row after 9/11.

Some Chinatown residents have lived in the neighborhood for several generations, while others are recent immigrants.

The Lower East Side is most similar to Chinatown, and both neighborhoods should be kept in the same legislative district if possible. Residents share a similar socio-economic status and concerns with affordable housing, language access to services. The neighborhoods of Tribeca, Soho, Battery Park City and Financial District should not be grouped with Chinatown because those neighborhoods are of a vastly different socio-economic status and have substantially higher income levels, and have no common interests of immigration or language assistance.

Lower East Side

Language: The Lower East Side is comprised of mainly Chinese American and Latino residents.

Housing: Many residents live in public housing and small tenement buildings. New market-rate residential development has led to direct and secondary displacement.

Employment: The Latino and Chinese residents have similar low-income levels and perform many of the same low-wage, unskilled jobs and share similar levels of education.

Transportation: Residents rely mainly on public transportation.

Concerns/Needs: The residents of the Lower East Side share common concerns about gentrification and its displacement of longtime residents. Rising rents and zoning changes have resulted in more tenant harassment and evictions and have pushed out small businesses serving local residents.

Conclusion

AALDEF's Asian American Communities of Common Interest Survey, taken together with the previously-submitted Asian American Neighborhood Boundaries, is designed to guide LATFOR in drawing new legislative districts that will preserve the voting rights of Asian Americans and other racial and ethnic minorities in New York. We urge LATFOR to keep communities of common interest together, and to ensure that racial minorities have a full and fair opportunity to elect candidates of their choice, as required by the Voting Rights Act.