



CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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JEFFREY LEFRANCOIS
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August 4, 2022

Dennis M. Walcott, Chair
New York City Districting Commission
Districting Commission
253 Broadway, 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10007

RE: Redistricting City Council District 3

Dear Mr. Walcott,

Manhattan Community Board 4 (“MCB4”), at a duly noticed public meeting taking place on Wednesday, July 27, 2022, voted unanimously to urge you to consider an alternative plan than the current Preliminary Plan for City Council District 3. The current proposal divides Manhattan Community District 4 (“MCD4”) in its northern neighborhood of Hell’s Kitchen into three different City Council Districts. We believe this current plan does not meet the requirements of keeping neighborhoods and communities of interest intact.

We urge you to consider an alternative plan that would unite Community District 4, protect the Special Clinton Preservation District, keep the neighborhood of Hell’s Kitchen intact, and provide better balance amongst our minority communities, particularly the Hispanic/non-white and Asian/non-Hispanic communities. We provide the following observations on the preliminary district maps the Commission has issued.

The paramount issue for MCB4 in reviewing these maps is that our community district be kept intact, and that neighborhoods are not divided. MCD4 is bordered by 14th Street at the south, by 59th Street at the north; by the Hudson River at the west, and by Sixth Avenue from 14th to 26th Streets and by Eighth Avenue from 26th to 59th Streets at the east. These boundaries are more commonly known as combining the neighborhoods of Chelsea and Hell’s Kitchen.¹ MCB4 advocates for the residents of Chelsea/Hell’s

¹ The official neighborhood of Clinton is known more colloquially as Hell’s Kitchen. This area is also referred to as Midtown West in some documents. MCD4 also incorporates Hudson Yards.

Kitchen and coordinates with our City Council Member, along with appropriate city agencies on the provision of their services within our boundaries. The Commission prioritizes keeping communities of interest intact which the current Preliminary Plan divides. Manhattan's Community District 4 should be considered a Community of Interest and be kept intact.

Within MCD4 there is a Special Purpose District as defined by zoning regulations which should also be considered a Community of Interest. The Special Clinton District was established in 1973. This special district is bordered by 41st Street at the south, by 59th Street at the north, by Eighth Avenue at the east, and by Twelfth Avenue at the west. It is designed to promote and protect public health, safety, general welfare and amenity. Because of the unique geographical location of the Clinton community, situated between the waterfront on the west and Midtown Manhattan's commercial district on the east, it is necessary to provide specific programs and regulations which will assure realization of community and citywide goals. The Preliminary Plan divides the Special Clinton District into three separate City Council Districts. The work required by MCB4 to ensure the protections of this district relies on the relationship with a single City Council Member and requires that the Special District remain united in one City Council District.

The neighborhood of Hell's Kitchen is defined as being bordered by the Hudson River at the west, Eighth Avenue at the east, 34th Street at the south, and 59th Street at the north. Hell's Kitchen has long been a safe haven for immigrant communities as well as a home to fledgling and working actors due to its proximity to Broadway theaters. Today, the area has a large LGBTQ+ population and is home to a large number of LGBTQ+ businesses. The neighborhood has changed dramatically in the last 30 years and rents have risen rapidly in the last decade.

The Districting Commission in its own presentation recognizes that the population growth in the City over the past 10 years has seen an "explosion" of growth amongst the Hispanic and Asian populations. Within Hell's Kitchen, the new census tracts show that approximately 18% of the neighborhood is "Hispanic/Latino," and approximately 20% "Asian/nonhispanic;" while the total of "White" is approximately 50%². However, the Preliminary Plan for City Council District 3 breaks down into 64% White to 36% Minority -- with only 13% Hispanic and 16% Asian. Combining Hell's Kitchen into one City Council District rather than dividing the neighborhood into three parts will bring this minority representation into better balance across the entirety of City Council District 3. We urge the Commission to re-unite the minority populations of Hell's Kitchen into one district.

The proposed new district maps turn Hell's Kitchen into a fringe district for three different City Council representatives. As outlined in the Commission's guidelines, communities should be kept intact, and this letter provides the reasoning to make Hell's

² <https://popfactfinder.planning.nyc.gov/explorer/ntas/MN0402>

Kitchen a community of one. We appreciate all the work being put into this process and hope that our guidance will make for a stronger set of City Council Districts that do not divide communities of interest and keep neighborhoods intact.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey LeFrancois
Chair
Manhattan Community Board 4

cc: Hon. Erik Bottcher, City Council
Hon. Gale A. Brewer, City Council