

DISTRICT OFFICE
444 EAST 75TH STREET, UNIT 1B,
NEW YORK, NY 10021
TEL: 212-860-1950

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE
250 BROADWAY, SUITE 1821
NEW YORK, NY 10007
TEL: 212-860-1950

E-MAIL: District5@council.nyc.gov



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August 12th, 2022

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

Dear Chair Walcott,

The New York City Charter requires that before the Districting Commission adopts a final plan for City Council Districts, it considers the comments, objections and observations of the elected Council Members. My staff and I have spent the last few weeks meeting with residents to solicit feedback regarding the proposed boundaries of New York City Council District 5. I am writing to comment and share these recommendations on the preliminary maps that the Commission has released.

From the beginning of this process, the New York City Council recognizes the difficulty of the task assigned to the members of this Commission which includes compliance with the federal voting rights act; adherence to the mandates in the City Charter; and sensitivity and recognition of the importance of continuity in neighborhood representation.

As the former Census Director for the City of New York, I recognize that the population of New York City grew considerably over the last decade and as a result the Commission must make significant changes to the current maps to comply with the various requirements. The preliminary maps significantly altered the composition of my District as almost 50,000 residents in Roosevelt Island, the Upper East Side, and Sutton Place were redistricted into Council District 26, a majority Queens District. I urge the commission to consider amending their preliminary maps to ensure that these neighborhoods are included in a majority Manhattan Council District and these communities of interest are preserved.

The City Charter stipulates that the preservation of communities of interest is a criteria that the Districting Commission must consider: "District lines shall keep intact neighborhoods and communities with established ties of common interest and association, whether historical, racial, economic, ethnic, religious or other." The draft lines separate communities of interest in the current Council District 5. Notably, the preliminary maps shift many schools from Council District 5 into Council District 26. Three elementary schools redistricted into Council District 26 — P.S. 158, P.S. 183, and P.S. 217, all will remain in Manhattan's School District 2, but would be represented by a Council Member who primarily represents Queens School Districts 24 and 30. Furthermore, many residents who would remain in Council District 5 would continue to

attend these schools despite the schools being represented by a different Council Member than the one who represents them.

The redistricting proposal also separates key transportation networks and decimates significant parkland from Council District 5. The Roosevelt Island Tram would be represented by two different Council Districts and the MTA's F train, a critical transportation artery for the island would have three separate Council Members representing the Roosevelt Island station and its two adjacent stops. Despite strong and longstanding ties, District 5 would no longer have many parks including portions of the East River Esplanade, Sutton Place Park, John Jay Park, and Andrew Haswell Green Park. The majority of District 26 residents do not have easy access to these parks and would need to cross the East River to utilize this valuable green space. Separating parks and transportation networks into different Council Districts will have detrimental effects to funding these public spaces receive from the City of New York. Furthermore, Council District 5 currently ranks 47th out of 51 Council Districts in terms of green space and with the loss of those parks would rank even lower.

Residents throughout these communities have contacted my office expressing their concerns that the new district lines separate communities of interest. My office has solicited input from civic groups, Community Boards, tenant associations, and co-op and condo boards and they have shared this feedback with us. These neighborhoods have historically been in Manhattan Council Districts and share strong historical, transportational, and cultural ties. This is evident from the robust testimony pouring in from residents across Roosevelt Island, Sutton Place, and the Upper East Side and by the reasons delineated above. The Commission must consider these strong community ties as they amend the draft maps.

I appreciate your consideration as the Commission continues its Districting process as outlined by the Charter and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Menin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

New York City Council Member Julie Menin
5th Council District