



THE COUNCIL *of* THE CITY OF NEW YORK

OFFICE OF COUNCIL MEMBER CARLINA L. RIVERA

September 29, 2022

Testimony from Council Member Carlina Rivera to the NYC Districting Commission

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in anticipation of the New York City Districting Commission Public Meeting Mapping Sessions on September 29 and 30, 2022.

As a lifelong New Yorker representing the communities that raised me, I am honored to represent New York City's 2nd Council District (CD2), which currently spans the diverse neighborhoods of the East Village, Lower East Side, Flatiron, Gramercy Park, Rose Hill, Murray Hill and Kips Bay. These neighborhoods have been connected within the CD2 in its current form for the past decade and reflect a diverse constituency.

The current proposed maps are less effective at reflecting communities of interest and effective representation. I urge the Commission to consider the following concerns:

- The proposed district lines fail to capture the cultural links reflected in the current map of CD2 that extends south of East Houston Street. Lower Manhattan's Lower East Side does not adhere to more arbitrary real estate demarcations (such as "Alphabet City") fueled by gentrification. Instead, communities of interest are linked by a shared history of immigration, languages, cultural identities, and civic institutions such as settlement houses.
- By removing public housing along the waterfront below Delancey from District 2, these lines reduce the electoral power of the Latino population, which spans a range of ethnic and racial backgrounds. For the last three decades following *Diaz v. Silver*, New York has recognized this community of interest as represented.
- The public housing developments along the East River also share unique challenges due to the effects of climate change. Jacob Riis Houses, Lillian Wald Houses, Baruch Houses, and Vladeck Houses all experienced damage and trauma during Hurricane Sandy, from which they are still recovering. This experience unites their interests along the waterfront, and moving these developments into more than one district separates this community of interest.
- Community District 3 Manhattan (CD3) spans the East Village, Lower East Side, and part of Chinatown, bordered by East 14th Street to the north and the Brooklyn Bridge to the south, and 58 percent of its population identify as low-income residents and residents of color. Per the FY2023 District Needs Statement for Fiscal Year 2023, "its character comes from its heritage as a historic and present day first stop for many

immigrants.” The proposed maps also fracture the 14,000 units of public housing that are currently represented by Community District 3.¹

- CD2 includes over 20,000 NYCHA residents who share social and economic interests, and interact in various ways, in terms of travel patterns, participating in the same institutions, shared languages and media consumption.
- The East Midtown Plaza housing complex, located between 1st and 2nd Avenues from 23rd to 25th Streets, have been ineffectively bisected in the current draft maps, creating unnecessary confusion and division for its residents.
- Kips Bay, bounded by E 23rd Street to the south and E 34th Street to the north between Lexington Avenue and 1st Avenue, is a community of interest defined by commercial activity, shared travel patterns, and entities supporting academic and medical hubs. Kips Bay is also home to NYCHA developments, affordable housing developments, and senior housing developments that are served well by being in District 2, as it reflects a diverse population that also exists in the East Village and Lower East Side below 14th Street.

I respectfully urge the Commission to take action to prevent the fracturing of existing communities with similar needs throughout CD2.

¹ <https://www1.nyc.gov/html/mancb3/downloads/cb3docs/CD3-DistrictNeedsStatement-FY2022.pdf>