

To: NYC Districting Commission  
From: Downtown Independent Democrats  
Date: September 14, 2022  
Subject: City Council District 1

Downtown Independent Democrats (DID) is submitting this testimony with specific interest in Council District 1. DID is a political club serving Lower Manhattan since 1972. We are currently the largest political club in Lower Manhattan, both geographically and in elected representatives. We proudly have as members of our club, six district leaders, four state committee members, a Congressman, a City Councilmember, and a State Assemblymember nominee. Geographically, this represents an area from NoHo to Governors Island, river to river, excluding the Grand Street area, with some parts of the district shared with other clubs.

Because our leadership and membership reach across Lower Manhattan and in our role as a political club, we are in a unique position to experience and reflect the issues and concerns of this area. While we touch into Council Districts 2 and 3, our primary representation and commentary is for Council District 1.

We reviewed the preliminary maps internally and with our District 1 Councilmember, Christopher Marte. Overall, we applaud and support the District 1 draft map.

First, here are additions that have been made in the preliminary maps to Council District 1 which we fully support. These inclusions in District 1 will help keep communities intact and improve their access to and clarity around representation:

- **We thank the commission for including East River Housing Corporation in a single council district:** Currently, East River's four buildings are located in two different council districts. This complicates the ability of the councilmember to assist their board and constituents, who often do not know why some of their neighbors are District 1 constituents, while others are in District 2.

- In addition, we fully **agree with adding Vladeck Houses to District 1**: Almost every side of Vladeck’s campus is in District 1, yet the apartment buildings themselves are in District 2. Adding Vladeck to District 1 does not counterbalance any demographics, but rather lets Vladeck, and its neighboring NYCHA campuses (LaGuardia Houses, and Rutgers Houses) become more unified in advocating for critical NYCHA-related issues.
- And we fully **agree with keeping Governors Island as part of District 1** because of its inclusion in Community Board 1.

However, there are some items which our community members are opposed to. We believe the Commission should reconsider the following:

- DID has many members in the northern part of the district, in **SoHo and NoHo**. These two areas are definitely “communities of interest” and it is mandated for the commission to preserve communities of interest. These areas have always considered themselves as a closely related, if not single neighborhood. They share a closely related history, demographics, as well common commercial and residential components.. The recent SoHo, NoHo, Chinatown rezoning by the City only underscored that relationship. Both are Historic Districts under the supervision of the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission.

The rezoning will have profound impacts on these areas, which will demand ongoing and effective representation. Separating them will dilute their voice and will also undermine community relations as the radical rezoning gets implemented. **SoHo and NoHo should be in one council district, District 1. We strongly support Councilmember Marte’s recommendation to keep the streets Bleecker, Bond, Great Jones and the southern portion of East 4th Street between Bowery to Broadway in District 1.**

- For many of the same reasons, we also agree with the Councilmember that **Silver Towers should be included in District 1**. From Broadway to Laguardia Place, we ask the commission to make the border Bleecker street instead of West Houston.

With these changes, we understand that District 1 population would be 176,626, which is under the 5% deviation mark.

Thank you for this important work. We are confident that with these changes, District 1 will incorporate the primary member interests of our club, provide clarity to our Council representation and not dilute the voices of our members who are and will be dealing with similar issues and changes that profoundly affect their lives.

Sincerely,

Richard Corman

President, Downtown Independent Democrats

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