

Good Afternoon, I am Dr. Norman Lafond, my wife Audrey and I are long term residents of the Upper West Side and Park West Village. Audrey has lived in Park West Village since 1979. And I have as well, since we were married in 2000. I am here to testify regarding the growth of District 7 in our neighborhood as a part of the redistricting process. We are fortunate to have a neighborhood rich in economic, ethnic, and religious diversity. We have everything in this area: facilities for low income elderly, public housing, middle class condominiums, luxury high rises, rent stabilized tenants, and market rate tenants. We have the elderly, young families with school aged children and middle aged empty nesters. But we manage to work for each other for a very special and inclusive community.

Unfortunately, our city council districts lines split the community in two on Broadway. This East West divide has been an old one and may have been useful in the distant past but it clearly is no longer longer useful. The community on either side of Broadway has shared common interests and needs. We shop at the same stores, worship together, and volunteer together. Yet we live in a district that arbitrarily splits us apart.

For example, my wife and I attend services at Holy Name of Jesus Church on 97th street and Amsterdam. And we also attend Ansche Chesed Synagogue on 100th and West End. And we are both joined by the congregations that live on both sides of Broadway.

And another example, the commercial corridor between 100th and 96th along Columbus Avenue runs through Park West Village in District 7, which also serves many of the constituents in the adjacent parts of District 6. Residents on both sides of Broadway are invested in the success of this commercial corridor – our community shops there and works there.

Finally, our residents on either side of Broadway take the 1 Trains and A Trains, and use the same exit off West Side Highway to get home. We face the same sanitation issues, as evidenced by our shared commitment to cleaning up Broadway Mall and advocating for more composting. We are joined in our efforts to pursue many shared projects, including the Park to Park Open streets that spans the entire west side down 103rd.

And so it seems that the most beneficial way for District 7 to increase is by expanding west of Broadway and south of 109th as necessary.

It is critical that Park West Village, where I live, remain part of District 7. This complex, which includes many rent stabilized apartments and hundreds of middle class home owners along 97th to 100th streets from Central Park West to west of Amsterdam, has turned out in high numbers every election and they have found a strong voice in local politics. Our voice would be greatly diluted if we were forced to find new footing in a district that has different priorities and very different needs. And we would be cut off from our neighbors to our north that are part of our neighborhood family.

I would also point out that the redistricting process can also remedy another obvious issue in the current map, which is that the Towers on the Park complex on 110th St. places one building on the south side of 110 street is in District 7 and the other on the north side of 110 St. is in District 9, when both clearly should be in District 7.