

My name is Al Kurland. I am a resident of Upper Manhattan. I am providing testimony regarding the growth of Council Districts 7 and 10.

I urge the commission to take steps that will ensure that districts in Upper Manhattan are compact, that they are not oddly shaped, that communities of interest are served, and that our historic neighborhoods do not lose representation on the City Council. To achieve these goals, the commission should include the Polo Grounds as part of District 10 and ensure the 160's and 150's remain part of District 7.

If District 10 is to grow, the Polo Grounds is the most natural direction for the district to expand. The Polo Grounds is already connected to District 10 via the FDR Highway all the way up to Dyckman Avenue. The highway extends down both sides of the district, connecting Dyckman Housing to the Polo Grounds and forming a community of interest. The current northeast part of District 10 already connects to the FDR highway, which directly connects to the Polo Grounds as well.

Coogan's Bluff, which is currently part of District 10, should serve residents on either side, including those currently in District 10 and the people who reside in the Polo Grounds Towers. The people living on each side of Coogan's Bluff are equally invested in selecting the council member who will be responsible for this major green space.

The Polo Grounds and the remaining areas of Washington Heights already share representation. For instance, Assembly District 71 currently includes the Polo Grounds and east of Amsterdam south of 159th Streets.

District 10 is already east of Amsterdam, encompassing Amsterdam, St. Nicholas, and Edgecombe. The district should continue south along these lines.

Finally, the 160's and 150's west of Amsterdam should remain in District 7. Washington Heights has always been represented by at least two council members, and shifting these blocks in the heart of Washington Heights would cut representation of this community in half. Programs that have historically received funding from council members representing both districts would likely see their funding cut, even as the needs and poverty in District 10 were to dramatically increase.

Cutting the 160's and 150's west of Amsterdam out of District 7 would also move Community Health Academy of the Heights to District 10, meaning that no high school would operate in District 7 and that all funding for high school programs would likely need to come from the District 10 budget. District 10 already has two high schools—George Washington Educational Campus and Gregario Luperon—both of which are in great need of additional support and resources. District 10 is not equipped to provide full attention and resources to a third high school.

The 160s cannot be separated from the 150s west of Amsterdam. A number of hispanic-serving institutions operate in the 150s, including Boricua College and the Hispanic Society museum, and these institutions are likely to thrive if they are represented by a council member elected by the people of southern Washington Heights, who have a historic and cultural connection to these institutions. Without question: cutting Washington Heights out of District 7 would fundamentally change the district.

Proposed map:

