

8/16/2012

Members of the Commission:

My name is Alex Luis Castex-Porter. I am a lifelong resident of Washington Heights. I work in residential real estate sales in Washington Heights and Inwood. The firm I am with is Prudential Douglas Elliman and my office is on the Upper West Side.

I wish to share several thoughts with you on the 7<sup>th</sup> city council district. I believe that the council district should extend from Fort Tryon Park, on down through 110<sup>th</sup> Street. With shared traffic and transportation concerns, shared parkland, homeowner concerns, among others.

The below portions of the neighborhoods of the Upper West Side, Manhattanville, West Harlem, Hamilton Heights and Washington Heights would benefit from being grouped together in council district 7.

**Boundaries referred to in this testimony:**

- From 155<sup>th</sup> Street to 192<sup>nd</sup> I believe the district should stretch from Broadway to the Hudson River.

- From 125<sup>th</sup> Street to 155<sup>th</sup> Street I believe the district should stretch from St. Nicholas Avenue to the Hudson River.

- From 110<sup>th</sup> Street to 125<sup>th</sup> Street I believe the district should stretch from Morningside Ave. to the Hudson River

1. Shared Vehicular Traffic Concerns:

Each of these areas contain portions of the Henry Hudson Highway and Riverside Drive, two major arteries connecting the Upper West Side (RSD) and neighborhoods further south to northern Manhattan (Henry Hudson). The two roads share a load of commuters during rush hours, and are obstacles (and access to points) in reaching the shared waterfront.

The George Washington Bridge, its bus terminal, and larger traffic issues coming from the bridge also have an impact in these neighborhoods.

Additionally these neighborhoods share bike paths along the river, and in the streets. Pedestrians and bike riders in these neighborhoods would benefit from being grouped together in council district 7, as would drivers.

2. Shared Mass Transit

The areas share two subway lines (A/1), and several bus lines including the M4 & M5.

3. Parkland:

Fort Tryon Park, Fort Washington Park, Bennett Park, J. Hood Wright Park, Riverside Park, Riverbank State Park, Sakura Park, numerous playgrounds and others are points for recreation and community gathering that would benefit from being represented by the same seat in the City Council. These parks, particularly Fort Washington Park, Riverbank, and Riverside are waterfront parks with shared concerns and needs.

4. Home Owner Concerns:

The neighborhoods in the suggested council district all have many homeowners, and are areas with dozens of cooperatives, and several condos. The number of owner-occupied buildings in these neighborhoods is much higher than the areas surrounding them.

Additionally, I currently live on 177<sup>th</sup> Street and Fort Washington Avenue, which is in district 10, yet many of my neighbors assume they are in district 7 because our building is west of Broadway. Again I suggest that the boundaries for district 7 and 10 should be moved east to Broadway from at least 181<sup>st</sup> Street on down, and if not Broadway, Fort Washington Avenue, moving buildings on the west side of the street (and further west) into district 7.

There are several co-ops that are members of the "Hudson Heights Owners Coalition" from the southern side of 181<sup>st</sup> street on down. This "border" is often mistakenly quoted as being the southern boundary of what some local residents refer to as "Hudson Heights" (the actual boundary is 173<sup>rd</sup>).

For example, these cooperatives are all west of Broadway and are currently **NOT** included in District 7, but are within the boundaries of what some are choosing to call "Hudson Heights." I believe they should be included in district 7:

720 West 173<sup>rd</sup> Street  
712 West 175<sup>th</sup> Street  
359 Fort Washington Avenue (176<sup>th</sup> Street)  
371 Fort Washington Avenue (177<sup>th</sup> Street)  
825 West 179<sup>th</sup> Street  
804 West 180<sup>th</sup> Street  
447 Fort Washington Avenue (180<sup>th</sup> Street)  
854 West 181<sup>st</sup> Street  
860 West 181<sup>st</sup> Street

870 West 181<sup>st</sup> Street

These buildings, along with many other co-ops and condos in Washington Heights, the co-ops and condos west of Morningside on The Upper West Side; and the co-ops and condos in Manhattanville, West Harlem and Hamilton Heights, would benefit from being represented by a single council district 7.

5. Columbia University:

The neighborhoods share campuses for Columbia University. Including the main campus, the new campus further north on Broadway, and the Medical Center campus in Washington Heights.

6. CB9 & the 26<sup>th</sup> Precinct:

Community Board 9 and the 26<sup>th</sup> NYPD Precinct have an opportunity to be placed in a single council district under the above boundaries.

Thank you for allowing me share my testimony online. Best of luck in the massive undertaking,

Alex Luis Castex-Porter