

Richmond Hill

Richmond Hill and Ozone Park are neighborhoods where Hispanic residents are the plurality group. In sections adjacent to Woodhaven, they're the majority group. Commission hearings and submissions have heavily emphasized the South Asian and Indo-Caribbean community centered in South Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park. But people repeatedly confuse these four distinct neighborhoods.

Many New York City neighborhoods contain overlapping communities, these four neighborhoods are no different. But I hope the Commission keeps neighborhoods intact to the extent practical. Some neighborhood divisions reflect clearly different socio-economic and demographic groups with limited interaction, but others do not.

Middle Village

Maspeth, Middle Village and Glendale are adjacent central Queens neighborhoods marked by lower density, high automobile ownership, and high home ownership. Neighborhood groups such as the Juniper Park Civic Association and COMET help bind them together. Their commonalities are one reason why together they form New York City Council District 30. It's a diverse area where Hispanic and Asian residents are almost half the population. But some proposals to the Commission divide these three neighborhoods unnecessarily. I urge the Commission to resist partisan gerrymanders and keep these neighborhoods together to the extent practical.

Jackson Heights

Proposals that append large blocks of southern Jackson Heights (Historic District and Garden Co-ops) to either Elmhurst or Corona Assembly districts dilute the voices of working class Asian and Hispanic immigrants. The Commission's Letters Plan correctly places higher income, higher formal education, higher turnout Jackson Heights residents in a Jackson Heights district entirely north of Roosevelt Avenue.

The Letters Plan reflects that (1) Elmhurst and Woodside and (2) North Corona and Corona residents are lower propensity voters. Citizenship and turnout rates are lower in these heavily immigrant communities. Because housing is dominated by one to three family houses often with limited English speakers, engagement is more difficult. Unlike densely populated co-op apartment blocks with fluent English-speaking professionals more common in Jackson Heights.

I urge the Commission to follow the Letters Plan division of Assembly districts and to discount maps by some non-partisan redistricting coalitions. They might reflect the political interests of incumbents and affluent Jackson Heights residents, but they don't reflect the working class immigrant communities in Corona, North Corona, Elmhurst and Woodside.