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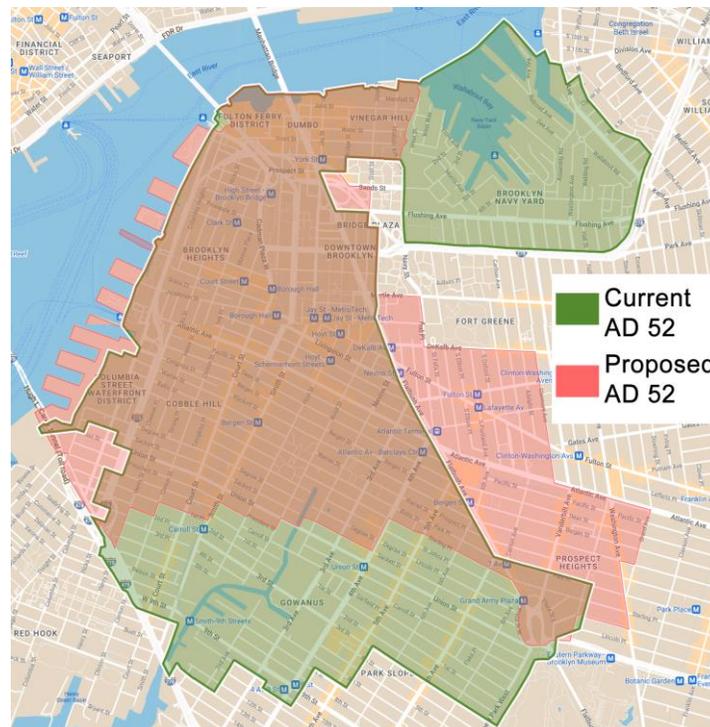
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Assemblymember 52<sup>nd</sup> District

## Comments in connection with the NYS Independent Redistricting Commission’s Draft Plan – AD 52

Thank you for this opportunity to submit comments on the Commission’s draft plan.

Before I was elected to represent the 52<sup>nd</sup> Assembly District (AD), I was the Democratic State Committeewoman/District Leader for AD52, a community activist, and neighborhood association leader. From each of these perspectives I’ve seen the importance of the interrelationship between communities like Carroll Gardens and Gowanus, I share the concern of others in these neighborhoods that the draft plan would divide this longstanding community of interest.

The proposed map would strip the core from the 52<sup>nd</sup> District – more than half of Carroll Gardens and all of Gowanus on the east side of the Canal. I know this core well. In 1981, I moved to 533 Clinton Street in Carroll Gardens, which was in AD52, but under the proposed plan, would no longer. It is important for the Commission to understand that these communities have been joined together electorally since at least as far back as Assemblyman Michael Pesce (1973-1980). The district offices of his successor, the late Hon. Eileen C. Dugan (1981-1996) maintained her district offices at 343 Smith Street. My predecessor Hon. Joan L. Millman’s (1997-2014) office was at 341 Smith Street where my District Office remains. The length of Smith Street from 9th Street to Atlantic Avenue is co-named for Assemblymember Dugan. But inexplicably, the proposed map (the red-shaded area) removes much of this area from the 52<sup>nd</sup> AD to the detriment of the remainder of the District.



Dividing these communities would undermine the community of interest around the planning for the future of Gowanus and Carroll Gardens and the safe and comprehensive clean-up of the Gowanus Canal, one of the most polluted waterways in the country, and its uplands where there are 47 Brownfield sites. This draft plan would ill-serve the community's goals by dividing the neighborhoods. The people in Carroll Gardens and Gowanus do not see them as separate communities of interest, but rather as two halves of a whole. Regardless of varying opinions on the original Superfund designation, everyone in the area wants it cleaned up safely. Being represented by one member with deep experience on the issues is consistent with that goal.

AD 52 is rich in American history. In 1776, General George Washington's troops were defeated at the Old Stone House, allowing Washington to escape across the Gowanus Creek to safety so he could go on to lead the Revolutionary War. Fulton's first steam-powered boat left from Fulton Ferry Landing in AD52. From the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, workers along the East River piers and Gowanus Creek, labored as longshoremen, boatmen, drivers, clerks, and U.S. Customs Inspectors on the ships and piers, in warehouses and factories that lined the waterfronts. Together the East River pier workers along with those working along the Gowanus Canal (completed in late 1860's and becoming a key location of the heavy industry that fueled and supported the industrial revolution) created community ties that bind. Brownstones quarried upstate and New Jersey were shipped up the Gowanus Canal to create the Brownstone Brooklyn communities that exist today.

From all this history grew tight knit communities of interest interconnected through the spine of the district, whose lumbar region the Commission proposes to sever.

There is no compelling demographic rationale for separating Gowanus and half of Carroll Gardens from the 52<sup>nd</sup> Assembly District. To do so would make achieving today's broad community goals that much more complicated and more time consuming for community leaders, who serve as volunteers.

By the same token, the proposed map would cut off part of Ft Greene from the rest of its neighborhood within Assembly District 57. There is no compelling demographic rationale for that decision, nor is there one for including all of Prospect Heights in AD52, while simultaneously cutting off the northern half of Park Slope from AD 52, much of which is naturally aligned with and part of the overall Gowanus canal area community of interest. In fact, since 2002, two-thirds of Park Slope was in AD52, reduced in 2022 due to population growth to roughly half of Park Slope.

I urge that the final plan reunite the community of interests that have been the hallmark of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Assembly District. The current map does so well.