

Statement to New York State Independent Redistricting Commission  
November 10, 2021

from Mae Lee, Executive Director of Chinese Progressive Association

Re: Manhattan Chinatown/Lower East Side (in NY County)

My name is Mae Lee, Executive Director of Chinese Progressive Association. We serve those who live, work, or go to school in Manhattan's Chinatown/Lower East Side. Among other things, we provide services to new immigrants, we provide classes and assistance to help them become U.S. citizens, and register them to vote after they become American citizens, and educate so that our community can be involved in the decision making processes that affect our lives. While we primarily serve the Chinese community, the citizenship programs are attended by a diverse group of Asian, Latino, African, and Caribbean immigrants. We are a member of APAVoice.

Chinatown/Lower East Side is a community of interest and must be kept together in any political district. This community of interest is made up of 1) the "historic core" centered around streets such as Mott and Mulberry Street, where Chinese immigrants first settled in the 1890's, 2) the section just east of Bowery where newer Chinese immigrants settled in greater numbers starting the 1990s, 3) the sections all the way to north to Houston Street and along the East River where Chinese residents live side-by-side with Black and Latino residents in the public housing projects or tenement buildings (since the 1960's when there was another wave of new immigrants).

This is a community of interest because we have similar socio-economic characteristics, similar issues of concern, we go to the same stores, our children go to the same schools, we utilize the same services.

In addition, there is a connection between Manhattan Chinatown and Sunset Park, Brooklyn. Chinese residents in Sunset Park often own businesses, have jobs, have family members, attend social activities, utilize libraries, parks and social services in Chinatown and vice versa. This connection is facilitated by a subway line (N train) that runs between them.

Things we saw in IRC maps that concern us:

1. State Senate letters plan "R" divides takes a part of Manhattan Chinatown/Lower East side and puts it in a district with Greenpoint, Williamsburg, Bushwick in Brooklyn
2. The State assembly names plan ("Downtown Brooklyn", Manhattan is not acknowledged) combines the entirety of Manhattan's Chinatown/Lower East Side into a district with the Brooklyn neighborhoods of Dumbo, Fort Greene, Clinton Hill

These plans divide our community of interest and/or combine it with other communities not of common interest

In conclusion: Chinatown/Lower East Side should be kept whole in one district at all levels of government. If it is to be combined with a neighborhood outside Manhattan across the river, that neighborhood would Sunset Park, Brooklyn for reasons stated above