My name is Sarah Gallagher and I am co-founder of Upper Green Side, a non-profit organization dedicated to making our community more sustainable.

Among its several activities, Upper Green Side is sponsor of the two Upper East Side Greenmarkets, organizer of the First Avenue Island Garden Project, street tree stewardship activities, generator of the weekly eco newsletter, “This Week at the Markets” and advocate for/actuator of enhanced NYC recycling.

I - on behalf of UGS - have also served as a member of the Task Force for the East River Esplanade which is currently chaired by Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney and Council Member Ben Kallos. The Task Force has from its inception, brought together area electeds, community members and city officials with the purpose of repairing, improving and expanding community benefits of the East River Esplanade from 60th to 120th Streets.

To advocate for and raise funds toward this much-needed end, area residents concurrently founded the non-profit Friends of the East River Esplanade for which I’ve been honored to serve as a board member.

For those unfamiliar with our Esplanade’s history and current state, The Esplanade was constructed in 1939 in tandem with the FDR and as a modest recreational platform along the East River.

And modest the Esplanade was and is… Given its several narrow stretches cheek-by-jowl with the heavily trafficked FDR… The decades of structural and aesthetic neglect that followed… Resulting in endless blocks of crumbling, pot-hole-scarred walkway… And even greater decay of the expansive, potential-packed but near-imploding 107th Street Pier just beyond our present district line...

Even so, the Esplanade has historically been viewed as a community asset and enjoyed – and loved - by residents from 60th to 120th and well beyond.

Since its inception, Friends have actively… Make that extremely actively… Labored to provide the repair, improvements and upkeep this marvelous urban space so deserves… With equally marvelous bonds forming between Manhattan neighbors north and south… With the great El Barrio Fisherman (for whom Friends designed an award-winning bait station)… With the East Harlem gardeners of Blue and Green Eco Care… With the Green Park Gardeners whose native plant garden is now an official stop on the Monarch Butterfly Migration Route… With Upper Green Side volunteers who’ve replanted/revived the Esplanade’s 96th Street Planter and the Robbins Plaza Senior Center Garden…

Then there’re scores of area volunteers who now actively garden year round on First Avenue traffic islands … Engage in bi-annual street tree stewardship events along both First and Second… Exchange indoor and outdoor plants at the 67th Street/53rd Street Library Branches Plant Swaps… Lend a hand with Randall’s Island tree pruning…

All of which is to say what were once quite separate Manhattan ‘hoods have become increasingly united/intertwined in interests, needs and purposes

And while, yes, great improvements have been made on the Esplanade and more… With millions of dollars in government funding secured to address the Esplanade’s particular, grave needs… This question looms…

How much more might be accomplished if we were – as we now are in our determination - one, single Congressional district, represented by a singular and singularly focused, elected individual?

And how much more will we need to accomplish – and keep synchronous - given the city’s recent promise to expand the Esplanade further south to 50th Street?

No question but I believe it would be in our and our great city’s best interests for the current Congressional district to expand both north and southward to create one unified electoral district.

Thanks so much for your consideration.