

Independent Redistricting Commission
250 Broadway, 22nd FL
New York, NY 10007

Re: Proposed Assembly district lines –Greater Rochester area

Dear Commissioners Jenkins, Nesbitt, Brady, Collado, Conway, Cuevas-Molina, Flateau, Frazier, Harris, and Stephens:

Please allow me to begin by thanking you for your service and work on the Independent Redistricting Commission (IRC). I am the former Monroe County Commissioner of Elections, having served for 17 years, retiring in 2019; and was Deputy Commissioner for 3 years as well. I've been involved in politics since the late 60's. Through my tenure I have experienced redistricting many times.

With that experience, I was somewhat stunned when reviewing the IRC proposed maps for the upstate Rochester region as it does not reflect our communities of interest. Over the past 30 years I have been involved in trying to ensure that communities of interest were considered when redistricting the Rochester area. I have seen time after time Monroe County/Rochester becoming the place where maps from the west and maps from the east are made to fit, with Monroe County dealing with the leftovers. The IRC proposed map under consideration is problematic as it does not fully recognize the importance of communities of interest in the city nor how the surrounding towns relate to the City.

During the redistricting of 2021, after a misstart by the redistricting commission the Assembly lines as I understand it were drawn beginning from the Rochester area and were pushed out. This created a chance to finally make right communities that had been divided for decades –the current Assembly lines indeed have corrected this history. Attached please find a list of the Rochester communities of interest along with a map of the current Assembly lines with communities of interest lines overlayed. This shows how, with very limited exceptions, communities of interest have been kept together in the current Assembly lines. In cases where some very minor divisions were carved out the community had asked for those sub-divisions. The School of Arts, the University of Rochester, Winton Village and Browncroft communities of interest to name specifics.

Also, the suburb communities that share interests were put together. Perinton, Pittsford and Penfield, as we locally refer to as the “P – towns” share many common interests and could in many ways be one community. Although it is impossible to bring all suburban schools districts totally together consideration was given where there were strong ties; in particular, the Churchville-Chili School District keeping the towns of Riga and Chili together were put together given the families and students in those two towns have a strong connection because of the unified school district.

Unlike the Assembly drawn maps, the IRC proposed map has failed on so many levels. To start with, putting our city south-east core with two strong towns, Irondequoit and Brighton undermines the importance of the efforts that have been and are being made to strengthen the city and ensure its success as an alive vibrant community standing on its own. The city's efforts in growing housing, businesses, community services for city neighborhoods are so important to the families of the south-east. These two towns will inevitably draw resources away that are needed so much.

Particularly, putting the whole south-east side of the city with these two towns diminishes the importance of those city rebuilding efforts as well as the arts in the city. The IRC proposal cuts the Neighborhood of the Arts in half without understanding the various elements of it. The Neighborhood of the Arts has a very strong sense of unity and is led by strong neighborhood and business associations. The renaissance of this area with an emphasis on the arts is a tribute to the unity of this community.

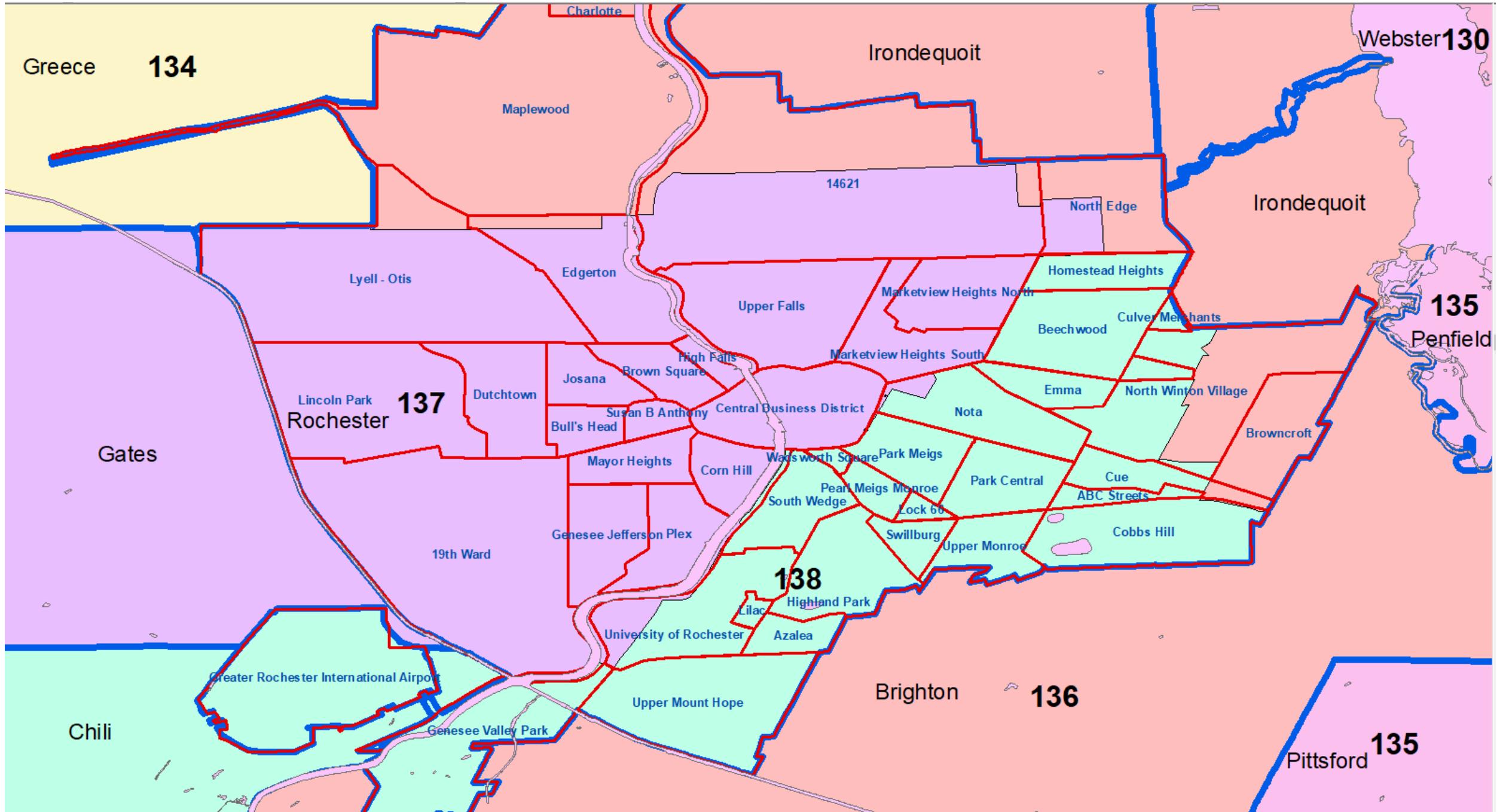
On the northwest side of Rochester, the IRC proposed map has cut the Maplewood Community into pieces. Like the south-east area, Maplewood Community has worked together in a unified way to improve the quality of life for its residents.

Additionally, the IRC proposed map places a small section of an Assembly district in the city near the river on the northside that cuts it off from anything surrounding it and there is a small section of another Assembly district going into Irondequoit without a clear reason. I can only assume these strange elements were some of your leftover parts.

Finally, the current Assembly lines provide similar communities that crossed city suburban lines with a link through their Assembly lines. For example, Gates and the city and Henrietta and the city.

I believe the IRC can fix this by taking a closer look at what was set in place under the current Assembly lines –looking, in particular, with how the City communities of interest have been kept together and how certain towns link with parts of the City. Please understand the community did have a strong voice in what was ultimately put in place and the lines repair, if I may, the sins of the past.

Tom Ferrarese
Former Commissioner of Elections,
Monroe County Board of Elections



Current NYS Assembly lines with COI overlaid

NEIGHBORHOODS OF ROCHESTER

AND HOW THEY GOT THEIR NAMES

1. 14621

For the area zipcode, which also covers parts of Irondequoit. Includes the old Carthage settlement (named for the ancient capital), a rival development to Rochesterville.

2. 19TH WARD

Bygone designation leftover when city planners organized the land tracts by wards.

3. ABC STREETS

For the unique naming structure of the neighborhood streets: famous scientists, naturalists, and discoverers, in alphabetical order from A-H.

4. AZALEA

For Azalea Rd., which was originally part of the Mount Hope Nursery. Area was formerly known as Highland Park Terrace.

5. BEECHWOOD

After a local post office and Beech-Nut Foods, known for Five-Stripe gum and baby foods.

6. BROWNCROFT

After the Brown Brothers Continental Nursery, which made up most of the area.

7. BROWN SQUARE

For the first public park in Rochester, so named for Matthew and Francis Brown, who owned and developed the tract.

8. BULL'S HEAD

For the Bull's Head Tavern, an early 1800s tavern that serviced cattle ranchers.

9. COBBS HILL

For Gideon Cobb, an early settler and original owner of the land.

10. CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

Some names are a matter of utility. Also known as Center City.

11. CHARLOTTE

Colonel Robert Troup, one of the early developers who laid out the city plan of Charlottesburgh, named it for his daughter.

12. CORN HILL

For the corn fields that boat captains used as a nautical landmark.

13. CUE

For the streets Culver, University, and East Culver for Oliver Culver, a prominent developer, University for the second home of University of Rochester, and East for its direction compared to city center.

14. CULVER MERCHANTS

Also known as the Triangle for its shape, named for streets Culver, for Oliver Culver, a prominent developer, and Merchants, for its commercial use.

15. DUTCHTOWN

A corruption of Deutschtown, for the concentration of German immigrants.

16. EDGERTON

For Edgerton Park, originally a multi-sport indoor arena built in 1892, now a recreation center with athletic fields and park, so named for H.H. Edgerton, former mayor.

17. E/M/A

For East Main St., Mustard St., and Atlantic Avenue. Mustard St. for the former entrance to RT French's Mustard Factory, and Atlantic for the ocean.

18. GENESEE JEFFERSON

For Genesee and Jefferson Streets. Genesee for the river, from a Seneca word meaning Pleasant Valley, and Jefferson for President Thomas Jefferson.

19. HIGH FALLS

Named for the nearby Upper Falls.

20. HIGHLAND PARK

For the Frederick Law Olmsted designed park within the area. Formerly Ellwanger-Barry, for George Ellwanger and Patrick Barry, founders of Mount Hope Nursery, one time world's largest.

21. HOMESTEAD HEIGHTS

Named after the Goodman St. Homestead Building Association. Also known as Bensonhurst, so named for the neighborhood in Brooklyn, NY.

22. JOSANA

Jay and Orchard Street Area Neighborhood Association. Jay Street is so named for John Jay.

23. LILAC

For the flowering shrub that has become synonymous with Rochester, thanks to John Dunbar and Bernard H. Slavin.

24. LINCOLN PARK

Named by Dyer Dayton Stanley Brown of Scottsville, the original land developer, for Abraham Lincoln. Also known as UNIT (United Neighbors In it Together).

25. LOCK 66

For the Erie Canal lock, when the canal traveled through the city, not south of it.

28. 29. MARKETVIEW HEIGHTS NORTH/SOUTH

Named for the Rochester Public Market (second home).

30. MAYORS HEIGHTS

For a forgotten former Mayor of Rochester. Also known as COTS (Changing Of The Scenes), for the variety and age of buildings. Once known as Chocolate City, for it's many brown buildings.

31. NOTA

Neighborhood Of The Arts, a 1990s reimagining of the area as a creative destination. Formerly Atlantic-University, Atlantic Ave., for the ocean, and University Ave., for the University Of Rochester.

32. NORTH EDGE

Also known as Northland-Lyceum. Strangely, Northland St travels east-west, and there was never a school on Lyceum St. Formerly known as Goat's Hill.

38. SOUTH WEDGE

For the geometric shape of the area.

36. PEARL MEIGS MONROE

For Pearl St., Meigs St., and Monroe Ave. Meigs St. so named for Return J. Meigs, Jr., former Post Master General, and Monroe Ave for President James Monroe.

37. PLEX

For Plymouth Ave and Exchange St, Plymouth for the Congregational Church founded on that street, and Exchange for it being the site of an Interurban trolley station.

39. SUSAN B. ANTHONY

For the neighborhood's most famous resident, who shared a home with her sister Mary.

40. SWILLBURG

Former site of George Goebels pig farm.

41. UPPER FALLS

More accurately named for the natural feature nearby. Formerly known as Butter Bowl/Butter Hole, for the abundance of dairy farms in the area.

42. UPPER MONROE

For Monroe Avenue, so named for President James Monroe.

43. UPPER MOUNT HOPE

For Mount Hope Avenue, so named by City Council, while also giving the cemetery of the same name.

44. WADSWORTH SQUARE

For a public commons in the area of the same name, which is so named for General James Wadsworth, who was the first landowner and developer of the area.

A. DURAND-EASTMAN PARK

For Dr. Henry S. Durand and George Eastman, original landowners of the area.

B. GREATER ROCHESTER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Originally called Britton Field, for the early pioneer family who owned the land.

C. GENESEE VALLEY PARK

For the Genesee River, so named from the Seneca word meaning Pleasant Valley.

D. UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER

Named for Nathaniel Rochester, city founder.

34. PARK CENTRAL

For Park Avenue, so named for the Union Horse Racing Track, a driving park owned by James Vick.

33. NORTH WINTON VILLAGE

For Winton Road, so named for Winton Motor Carriage Company, a prominent 1900s automobile manufacturer.

35. PARK MEIGS

For Park Avenue, so named for the Union Horse Racing Track, a driving park owned by local developer James Vick. Meigs for Meigs St., so named for Return J. Meigs, Jr., Post Master General of the US at the time.

27. MAPLEWOOD

For Maplewood Park, renamed from Maple Grove, an old resort area, so named for the abundance of maple trees.