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Contact:

Richard C. Hellenbrecht
Queens Civic Congress, Inc.
Telephone: 646-732-5784
Fax: 212-268-7509
info.qcc@verizon.net
www.nycqcc.org

Queens Civic Congress Responds to Districting Commission Boundaries for Queens City Council Districts

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The Queens Civic Congress is an umbrella organization representing over 100 civic and homeowners associations throughout the Borough of Queens. Queens Civic Congress is extremely disappointed with the first draft map presented by the New York City Districting Commission in August of 2012. Civic leaders, particularly in Queens with its distinctive named towns, demand to retain the integrity of established communities – and the Commission’s proposed plan needlessly tears many of these communities asunder.

As a non-partisan organization, our main focus is the protection and improvement of the residential neighborhoods of Queens. We in the QCC also have a very serious concern for the fair political representation of Queens’ residents. The arbitrary and haphazard boundaries proposed by the Commission will further divide rather than unite our communities and do not meet those important democratic benchmarks that we expect in New York City. Therefore, the Queens Civic Congress calls for the Districting Commission to revise the maps to reflect actual neighborhood boundaries whenever possible.

Since the proposed district lines were released the media has reported - erroneously - that the Council District boundaries had "barely moved" or remained almost the same. This is extremely misleading, as even small shifts in geographic areas can have an intense effect on a Council District's composition. Additionally, while the core areas of many districts remained the same, some have been significantly changed from their present boundaries - particularly around the edges.

Many of the proposed adjustments to the map designed by the Districting Commission are mystifying to our constituent member organizations. Several of the new lines divide neighborhoods - very well-defined by long-accepted boundaries, including natural and/or man-made barriers - that were previously within one district only. **Disturbingly, very few of the Commission’s decisions seem to advance the process of reapportionment based on population, as most present Council Districts in Queens are within the 5% deviation allowed under the City Charter. Additionally, the Commission's first draft appears to show little concern for the integrity and unity of our neighborhoods.**

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Careful analysis by many QCC member organizations demonstrates that changes can be made to the district maps - easily and without rancor - to both meet the Article 52 district mandates while also better reflecting Queens County residents' desires for united communities. Our existing neighborhoods are established based on "common interest," particularly similarity of housing stock, and they must remain intact. Towns that are presently divided in an awkward fashion can be reunified, resulting in the preservation of our "towns" and "villages" that have long defined the borough of Queens and concurrently meet the commission's highest need - the population census requirement.

Our report, along with maps and population analysis, is located on the Queens Civic Congress website at http://nycqcc.org/proposed_maps.aspx and can be accessed at any time. Additionally, the Queens Civic Congress has submitted their proposal for a Queens-wide map at the Districting Commission website and it is available for public review.

We urge the Districting Commission to strongly consider and adopt the lines that our membership - the civic and homeowners associations of Queens - has designed. These maps, prepared by the Queens Civic Congress, have been carefully checked to meet the population requirements while keeping named communities together. As designed, our proposed district boundaries will ensure the integrity of our towns while respecting natural geographical and neighborhood boundaries.

Analysis by: Queens Civic Congress and Associated Cultural Resource Consultants

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