

September 13, 2021

City of San Diego Redistricting Commission
202 C Street
MS2A
San Diego, CA 92101
Sent via electronic transmission

Re: City Heights Community of Interest

Dear Commissioners,

The Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans (PANA) San Diego is an advocacy organization and community organizing hub dedicated to advancing the full economic, social, & civic inclusion of new immigrants and refugees in the San Diego region. We are working diligently throughout the County's redistricting process by mobilizing our community members and holding various community mapping sessions to ensure African, Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian refugee and immigrant communities are seen, heard, and empowered as district boundaries are redrawn. We are writing to you today in concern for the possible fragmentation of City Heights, currently located in City Council District 9, and our interest in keeping City Heights together.

City Heights is home to a diverse population of BIPOC refugees and immigrants, including a high concentration of Latinx, Southeast Asian, and African communities. PANA supports and works closely with the Somali, Oromo, Amharic, Eritrean, and Karen and Burmese communities in City Heights, some of whom came as refugees in the 1990s and have been in City Heights for over 30 years. City Heights has historically seen high numbers of refugee resettlement, relying on strong community networks for mutual aid and support. From our community mapping sessions, we concluded that City Heights boundaries include El Cajon Blvd to the north, 54th Street to the east, Interstate 805 to the west, and Home Avenue to the south. Some community landmarks are as follows: The City Heights Tower, Colina Del Sol Park, The Community College Mid-City Adult Learning Center, 50th street and University, Oak Park Elementary School, the City Heights library, and Ali's Chicken & Waffles.

The refugee community in City Heights experiences high rates of hidden homelessness, with families doubling up in the same home to afford rent. As a newcomer community, the majority speak a primary language other than English at home, and are limited English proficient. City Heights must remain united in a single District to ensure that their shared needs as BIPOC refugees and immigrants, such as affordable housing, equitable transportation access, and English Language Services, are adequately addressed by the City of San Diego.

Back in the 2010 redistricting cycle, the City Heights community mobilized for months to be unified in a single City Council district. Their efforts, along with other community advocacy organizations, led to the success of a unified City Heights within a single City Council district, District 9. City Heights may have remained fragmented across three districts if it weren't for the hard work of community members, community leaders, and the Redistricting commission who recognized the necessity of keeping City

Heights' Communities of Interest together. During this redistricting cycle we have convened 5 community mapping sessions in City Heights with 116 community members in participation: One hundred percent of those who engaged had prioritized and defined City Heights within a unified District.

We hope that the commission listens closely to the voices of the refugee and immigrant community in City Heights, and their collective needs to ensure a more welcoming and successful resettlement in San Diego.

Sincerely,

PANA San Diego