

## On Redistricting ANC 1C's Triangle Below Florida

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I am a resident of the Triangle between Florida Avenue and U Street west of Sixteenth. I am moderately in favor of moving this area to ANC 1B on the new map—as I said in submitting a different map proposal, my partner and I are “at least as likely to go east or south when we go out as north: while the car sewers of 16th and U Streets do make powerful barriers, so does the hill north of Florida.” But I am also testifying today in response to the dissent submitted to the Redistricting Task Force’s report by former 1C Commissioner and Chair Amir Irani and endorsed by the current ANC 1C.<sup>1</sup>

FIRST, the results of the Task Force’s ‘flash poll’ distributed to residents in and near the Triangle<sup>2</sup> belie Mr Irani’s assertion that residents’ “shopping, work and leisure patterns. . . tend strongly toward” 18th rather than U Street.<sup>3</sup> As Mr Irani himself notes, the poll found that residents were roughly split between them—based on the responses, people in either area that the Triangle could be attached to think it should be attached to their area, but residents of the Triangle itself think it could go either way. My partner and I personally tend more toward U Street, but as a group our neighbors apparently do not “tend strongly” in *either* direction.

SECOND, the “46,000 sq. ft. of commercial space on 18th Street. . . one block west” of the Triangle which Mr Irani points to is a handful of bars and restaurants separated by several blocks from Adams Morgan’s 18th Street strip, and arguably is more integrated with the Dupont section of 18th Street immediately across Florida.

Furthermore, while Mr Irani points to a large grocery store “approximately two blocks north” on Kalorama, grocery stores on 14th Street either side of U and on 17th in Dupont are almost precisely the same distance from Seaton Street—0.5 miles or ten minutes walking.<sup>4</sup> A look just at distance, however, ignores the impact of topography. It is easier to walk to, and to carry food or other items back from, locations that are across a relatively flat plane from you. This is why, again, my partner and I are “at least as likely to go east or south when we go out as north”. (Similarly, I’m more likely to go to the West End or Shaw library than the one in Mount Pleasant: All are roughly the same distance, but one is noticeably uphill.)

<sup>1</sup> Ward 1 RTF Report, Attachment 5: Member Dissents In Part, page 55.

<sup>2</sup> While Mr Irani refers the area as the Strivers’ Section throughout, it in fact represents only the northernmost quarter or so of the Section, which extends several blocks into Ward 2. Since only the Triangle between Florida and U is at issue, I refer to it as such.

<sup>3</sup> The poll asked residents whether we “experience [this area] as significantly oriented toward U Street/Cardozo to the East, or Adams Morgan to the North?”; the survey further clarified that “‘Significantly oriented’ indicates frequent, regular patterns of movement (such as where people run errands, hang out, shop, or work).” It also asked whether residents feel the area “is more significantly impacted by neighborhood changes that happen in U Street/ Cardozo to the east, or Adams Morgan to the north?” and whether it “is more strongly identified with the U Street commercial corridor [or] the 18th Street commercial corridor?” On each question, there were opportunities to say “both” or “neither/unsure”.

<sup>4</sup> the Citadel Harris Teeter, 14th Street Trader Joe’s and Yes Organic, and Corcoran St Safeway, respectively.

THIRD, Mr Irani states residents are better served by 1C representation; I have little if any way of knowing if this is accurate, having never lived in 1B, but currently the Triangle below Florida is split between two SMDs, fit together like puzzle pieces, and both Commissioners live some blocks up the hill. In fact, at least three other Commissioners, from three different ANCs, live closer than the 1C Commissioners who represent this area.<sup>5</sup> However, while we obviously would not make up an entire SMD by ourselves, it *is* unfortunate that the new map does not take the opportunity to unify these four small blocks and 900-some residents into a single district.

MR IRANI SAYS “Redistricting is based on a snapshot taken at a moment in time,” which he says means that redistricting shouldn’t speculate how the population will grow over coming decades. However, I believe it also means that redistricting shouldn’t reach back decades to try to recreate links if they no longer exist. As a relatively recent newcomer to the area—I’ve lived on Seaton Street for three years—I *want to be absolutely clear that I don’t feel qualified to say whether they do or don’t*. However, based on the poll conducted by the Task Force, it certainly seems my neighbors feel just as tightly linked to the rest of the U Street Corridor as to Adams Morgan.

Thus, while there may be arguments for keeping us in the Adams Morgan commission that would be convincing, I believe that Mr Irani’s Dissent misrepresented the results of the Task Force’s survey, and more broadly does not represent my experience of living in the Northern Quarter of the Strivers’ Section. I support the Task Force’s decision to move the Triangle between Florida and U Street into ANC 1B, and look forward to being part of a U Street-wide commission.

FINALLY, I also note that when I talk with folks from other parts of the District, if I say I live in Adams Morgan they think I mean on the hillside, or up at Euclid Street or Columbia Road. I often tell people that I live on the flat *below* Adams Morgan, or in the space *between* Adams Morgan and Dupont—or simply *near 18th & Florida*.

In written testimony, my friend Alex Baca says of living in Mount Pleasant, “While 16th Street is unpleasant and unsafe to walk on and cross. . . I didn’t feel that it was a geographic boundary. . . .” This applies down here as well. To me, the hill itself and the large institutions that sit just above Florida Avenue (from the school to the literal gated community atop an enormous retaining wall) are much stronger borders and barriers than the traffic of 16th and U Streets.

<sup>5</sup> Commissioners Alan Kensek (1B05), Howard Bauleke (1C01), and Matthew Holden (2B08) all live closer to me than Commissioners Jake Faleschini (1C07), who represents the small area between Seaton and U Street, and Fiona Clem (1C08), who represents the rest of the Triangle. Notably, Holden represents roughly 3/4 of the Strivers’ Section Historic District, of which the Triangle makes up the remainder.