

**Statement on Equity Considerations in Redistricting  
Affecting the Boundary Between Ward 3 and 4  
November 15, 2021**

In developing a Ward redistricting plan, the Council must consider the racial and equity impacts of possible boundary changes. The law expressly provides that “No redistricting plan or proposed amendment to a redistricting plan shall be considered if the plan or amendment has the purpose and effect of diluting the voting strength of minority citizens.” DC Code § 1–1041.02(f). Some proposals have been made to revise the borders between Wards 3 and 4 that could affect current Ward 4 residents in Chevy Chase, Barnaby Woods, and Hawthorne. ANC 3/4G’s Racial and Social Equity (RASE) Committee has examined the arguments for and against making changes through an equity lens and offers its views to the Commission.

First, some of the arguments for “reuniting” the part of Ward 4 west of Rock Creek Park (“the Park”) with Ward 3 have suggested that Ward 4 neighborhoods are “demographically” and “racially” more like Ward 3, and that this should be the basis for a return to the geographic boundary of the Park. There is a widespread perception in other parts of the District that this boundary has created an enclave that is White and privileged. Attempts now to “reunite” Ward 3 may be seen by some as a dog whistle for preserving historic segregation. As a part of Ward 4 for the past 20 years, we have built positive bridges across the Park and have engaged on equity issues that affect the District as a whole. We should reject any arguments that are based on perpetuating the historic racial divisions east and west of the Park.

Second, decisions about ward boundaries should reflect the views of the affected communities. Hawthorne is probably the most diverse neighborhood west of the Park, where many Black residents have lived for decades. Their voices need to be heard and their views considered in any redistricting changes. Some of these residents may place greatest weight on the need for representation and accountability on issues that are primarily focused in Ward 3 — e.g., Wilson High School and Deal Middle School and equity concerns related to the Connecticut Avenue corridor. Others may value common issues with Ward 4 — e.g., equitable policing and preservation of affordable housing. Redrawing ward boundaries may also dilute or concentrate the strength of Black voters in one ward or the other. Councilmembers cannot assume what these residents want, and they should not

make decisions on their behalf without reaching out to them directly to hear their concerns.

The RASE Committee takes no position on what the ward boundaries should be. Nevertheless, two principles should be paramount: (1) the Commission should reject any arguments implying that portions of Ward 4 should be returned to Ward 3 because they are racially more homogeneous; and (2) the Commission should advise the Council that it should make no decision about the boundary between Wards 3 and 4 without first hearing from the affected Black residents.