

**Martinez, Ruben**

---

**From:** Jonathan Edwards <[redacted]>  
**Sent:** Sunday, December 12, 2021 11:35 PM  
**To:** PublicComment-AutoResponse  
**Cc:** cityclerk; Jomsky, Mark  
**Subject:** RE: 15 Redistricting  
**Attachments:** 2021-12-12 LA Times Article Pasadena Redistricting.pdf; 2021-12-12 Pasadena Redistricting letter revision of Sept.pdf

**CAUTION:** This email was delivered from the Internet. Do not click links or open attachments unless you *know* the content is safe. Report phish using the Phish Alert Button. [Learn more...](#)

RE: Pasadena City Council meeting of 12/13/2021,  
Item 15. "An Ordinance Of The City Of Pasadena Amending Title 1, Chapter 1.20 ("Election Districts") Of The Pasadena Municipal Code"

Please enter the following into the record and distribute to council:

1. Complete text of the Article from The Los Angeles Times, "*Pasadena's City Council districts under scrutiny. Experts say map may disenfranchise Latino voters, dilute voices*" by Seema Mehta, dated Sunday Dec 12, 2021.
2. My attached letter.

Thank you!

**Jonathan Edwards**  
Pasadena, California

# CALIFORNIA

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2021 • LATIMES.COM/CALIFORNIA



ALL OF Pasadena's seven City Council districts touch Colorado Boulevard, a tradition that more experts say could be detrimental to representation. Above, the 2017 Rose Parade on the famed street. MAT MEXICO/LOS ANGELES TIMES

## Pasadena's City Council districts under scrutiny

Experts say map may disenfranchise Latino voters, dilute voices

By SEEMA MEHTA

For decades, each of Pasadena's City Council districts has touched Colorado Boulevard — the route of the world-famous Rose Parade and the economic, entertainment and civic heart of the city.

But this tradition is leading redistricting experts and activists to claim that the seven districts are skewed in such a way that they may disenfranchise Latino voters and dilute the voices of downtown residents.

Residents of the city's core are split among multiple districts, leading to complaints that no member of the City Council truly represents their interests on issues such as development, transportation and pedestrian friendliness.

"If everyone's in charge, no one's

in charge," said Marsha Rood, the vice president of the Downtown Pasadena Neighborhood Assn, who wrote city officials a letter about her concerns last month. "Nobody's pushing our issues. Nobody. They don't go to bat for us."

Redistricting experts say splitting this neighborhood may violate the state's Fair Maps Act, which requires officials to try to draw districts that are geographically contiguous and avoid dividing neighborhoods or communities that share social or economic interests.

Others worry that the districts

water down the voting power of Latinos.

At the request of The Times, GOP redistricting expert Matt Rexroad's firm studied the proposed Pasadena map and census data. The firm found that, although no current or proposed districts contain a ma-

majority of Latinos citizens of voting age, two could "easily" be drawn with such populations.

"This city is ripe for a legal challenge under the Voting Rights Act," Rexroad said, referring to the landmark federal electoral law that prohibits racial discrimination in voting, including the dilution of minority voting power.

The city's redistricting consultants say their maps are fair and have produced results: Pasadena's elected leadership is diverse, with a Latino mayor and a council that includes three Black Americans, one Latina and one Japanese American.

Latino voters have the ability to elect candidates of their choice in three districts, said Douglas Johnson, president of the National Demographics Corp., and David Ely, owner of Compass Demographics. (See Pasadena, B9)

## A push to block freeway projects in poorer areas

State lawmaker cites racial and health disparities caused by highway construction.

By LIAM DILLON AND BEN POSTON

A state lawmaker from Los Angeles County plans to introduce legislation that would block freeway expansions in underserved communities across California.

Assemblywoman Cristina Garcia (D-Bell Gardens) said her bill would prohibit the state from funding or permitting highway projects in areas with high rates of pollution and poverty and where residents have suffered negative health effects from living near freeways.

She said state leaders should consider the significant evidence of racial and health disparities caused by highway construction as well as research showing that freeway widenings frequently fail to resolve traffic congestion because they include more car trips.

"If we have the data and we have the research and we're ignoring it, that's when it starts to become criminal when you're in a position of power," Garcia said.

Garcia said the impetus for the legislation, which she plans to introduce early next year, was a recent Times investigation that documented the effects of freeway construction over the last three decades. The Times found that more than 200,000 people nationwide have been displaced because of federal road projects during that time, and that some of the country's largest recent highway expansions have forced out residents in Black and Latino neighborhoods at disproportionately high rates.

For years, Garcia has fought efforts to widen the 710 Freeway through predominantly Latino southeastern L.A. County communities. Health problems resulting from air pollution along the existing 710 corridor have led some to refer to the area as "cancer alley."

Less than five years ago, her brother's real estate brokerage business was displaced to accommodate an expansion of Interstate 5 through Santa Fe Springs, part of a series of I-5 widenings in Los Angeles and Orange counties in recent decades that forced out 850 families in largely Latino neighborhoods.

The Times reporting, she (See Freeway, B4)



HEALTH problems from air pollution along the 710 Freeway have led some to call the area "cancer alley." ROBERT GAYMER/LOS ANGELES TIMES



JIMMY SHAW, owner of Loteria Grill, holds two types of chilaquiles: green and red. "There are as many chilaquiles recipes as there are homes in Mexico," he said. OSCARO MORALES/LOS ANGELES TIMES

## In a quest for chilaquiles, let the chips fall where they may

STEVE LOPEZ

In the 1980s, when Grace and Tony Lopez boarded a plane in California to visit me in Philadelphia, they traveled with a blue-and-white cooler that contained a most precious cargo.

Chilaquiles. This simple dish of saucy chips and chiles was unavailable in my new home. So my parents would go to New Mecca Cafe in the East Bay town of Pittsburg, where I had ordered chi-

laquiles about a thousand times, and purchase a bag of tortilla chips and half a gallon of the secret sauce. They froze the sauce, which thawed out on its journey to the East Coast. My mother then heated this miraculous concoction, ladled it over the perfectly crispy chips and sprinkled cheese on top.

As a Philadelphian might say, it tasted so good I almost wanted to pay my taxes.

Decades have come and gone. My obsession has not. I have eaten chilaquiles as every opportunity, and I have tried for years to recreate the New Mecca Cafe version in my kitchen. I got

to thinking about comfort food because we have entered traditional tamale season, and I would never say no to a tamale.

But I remain loyal to my first love. And I've decided it's finally time to come clean about my affliction, and to share some trade secrets for which you will be eternally grateful. Yes, I know the world is in peril, and chaos reigns, themes I will return to in time. But when has comfort food been more important than now?

Fortunately for me, a Guadalupe native in 1986 opened a restaurant in Philadelphia, and I no longer had to wait for my chips (See Lopez, B8)

## State to seek gun limits modeled on Texas law

By LIAM DILLON

AFTER the U.S. Supreme Court declined to block a Texas state law that bans most abortions there, Gov. Gavin Newsom said he'll push for a new California law that deters the manufacture and sale of assault rifles in the state.

In a statement Saturday night, the governor said he was outraged by the court's failure in a decision Friday to enforce longstanding constitutional protections in favor of abortion rights.

But by not striking down the Texas anti-abortion law, which relies on private citizens for enforcement, Newsom argued that the court has endorsed states' ability to create similar legal mechanisms to safeguard laws from federal court review. In his statement Saturday, Newsom referred to a recent federal court decision that overruled the state's ban on assault rifles in which the judge compared the weapons to a Swiss Army knife.

"If states can now shield their laws from review by the federal courts that compare assault weapons to Swiss Army knives, then California will use that authority to protect people's lives, where Texas used it to put women in harm's way," Newsom said.

The Texas Heartbeat Act, also known as Senate Bill 8, declares it illegal to perform an abortion after about six weeks of a pregnancy but gives the state no direct role in enforcing that ban. Instead, it authorizes private lawsuits in state courts against doctors or (See Guns, B4)

### Pearl Harbor was a jolt for L.A.'s Japanese

The city then had 36,000 members of the community, most near Little Tokyo. **B3**

### Man charged in brutal attacks

Six women were targeted in the Riverside County sexual assault case. **B3**

### Driver held in death of jogger

A Pasadena man faces charges after a crash that left a woman dead last month. **B3**

### Group to buy redwood land

Plan aims to protect part of Northern California's Lost Coast. **B4**

Lottery **B3**

## Newsom channels dyslexia struggles into a kids book

By TARYN LUNA

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Gavin Newsom has struggled with dyslexia since elementary school. Now he's telling his story through Ben, the baseball-loving protagonist of his new children's book who has a tough time reading, too.

"Ben & Emma's Big Hit," which goes on sale Tuesday, parallels Newsom's experience with dyslexia, which he learned he had in fifth grade. The 54-year-old governor said parenting his own children, who also have learning issues, inspired him to work

with Philomel Books, an imprint of Penguin Random House, after noticing a lack of picture books designed for young dyslexic children learning to read.

Ben's character draws on a young Gavin, who excelled on the baseball field but whose learning issues left him anxiety-ridden in the classroom, perishing at reading time and feeling like he wasn't as smart as other kids.

Ben's teammate Emma fakes her reading abilities by looking around the "biggest, fattest" chapter books, which the governor said is (See Dyslexia, B8)

# Beverly Hills firefighters sue over shot order

By Alex Wooglesworth

Two Beverly Hills firefighters are suing over Los Angeles County's mandate that healthcare workers be vaccinated against COVID-19.

It's the latest salvo in the heated battle between some public sector employees and governments over public health requirements, which have seen workers stage protests and mount legal actions.

The union that represents the firefighters, the Los Angeles Superior Court on behalf of Josh Sattley and Ettore Bernardinelli Jr., names the city of Beverly Hills, Councilman John Mirisch, Los Angeles County and county health officer Muna Davis.

At issue is the rule announced in August that all county healthcare workers, which includes first responders, be vaccinated unless they have medical reasons or religious beliefs that would exclude them. The suit argues that neither Davis nor the city has the power to issue such an order and refers to COVID-19 vaccines as "experimental gene modification therapies."

"Firefighters and other first responders have served courageously throughout the COVID-19 pandemic," Scott Street, an attorney for the plaintiffs, wrote in an email. "They were on the front lines when others sheltered in place. They earned the right to be heard but, in enforcing the County's unlawful mandate, the City of Beverly Hills has largely ignored them and put politics before facts."

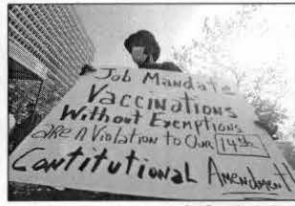
Attorneys for L.A. County could not be reached for comment Saturday.

"The work of emergency first responders puts them on the front lines of patient care," Keith Sterling, chief communications officer for the city of Beverly Hills, said in a statement. "While we have not yet seen the lawsuit, the city remains committed to protecting the health of our residents and visitors during this ongoing pandemic."

The union that represents the firefighters, the Beverly Hills Firefighters Assn., has said that it encourages its members to get vaccinated but believes it should be a personal choice.

The lawsuit says Beverly Hills subjected firefighters who requested religious exemptions "to cross-examination designed to undermine their credibility and to pressure them, under threat of prosecution, to give up their religious freedom and get the shot." The actions amounted to religious discrimination, the suit alleges. At least 22 firefighters were questioned between Sept. 28 and 30, and eight, including Sattley, were denied religious exemptions, the lawsuit states. Some of those firefighters then got the vaccine but Sattley resigned and was put on unpaid leave, according to the complaint. The city did not give him an opportunity to challenge his suspension, violating his right to due process, the lawsuit says.

Bernardinelli received a temporary 30-day religious exemption, but the lawsuit alleges the city retaliated against him by assigning



A MAN opposed to vaccination mandates protests at Grand Park in downtown Los Angeles last month.

him to a job that receives fewer calls and preventing him from responding to certain calls.

The lawsuit also cites a September tweet by Mirisch in which he shared a letter he wrote to Beverly Hills Weekly taking issue with the fact that some 30% of the city's firefighting force had requested religious exemptions to the mandate.

"If any of the firefighters who applied for exemptions on an unprecedented scale are gaming the system — and it seems highly likely that many, if not most, of them are — it is nothing short of outrageous," Mirisch wrote. "The firefighters applying for an exemption will be interviewed under penalty of perjury to ascertain whether their refusal to get vaccinated is medically necessary or rises to the level of a bona fide religious conviction."

The tweet amounted to retaliation against the plaintiffs for exercising their 1st Amendment rights, the law-

suit alleges. On Saturday, Mirisch defended his comments and said he personally believes the city shouldn't grant religious or medical exemptions at all, although he said the majority of the City Council does not feel the same way.

"To say that people who are supposed to serve the public are acting in such a way that is self-entitled is an understatement," he said, noting that city firefighters protested the mandate in October in an event promoted by the union during which they spoke about taking back charge of their department.

"There was a rally in front of City Hall which I would call an anti-vaxxer MAGA-palooza," Mirisch said. "Here they are claiming they are not anti-science or anti-vaccine, but they were standing next to people holding signs saying 'COVID is a scam.' They are talking out of both sides of their mouths."

Speakers at the rally included both Sattley and the union's president, Victor Ostrowski, who called on members to support Sattley, according to the Beverly Hills Courier. Sattley has become an outspoken opponent of vaccine requirements, his Instagram page replete with posts decriing such rules and stating they are delaying response times and reducing service levels.

"I make the case it's not their department — I never was their department," Mirisch said.

"It's our department. It's the department of the residents and the community, and the fact that they are acting in such a self-entitled way shows just how out of hand it has gotten."

He said that as the conflict grinds on, he's heard older residents express fear of calling 911 out of concern the firefighter paramedics who respond might be unvaccinated. "Traditionally, the community has always revered our firefighters and had a great relationship with them," he said. "I think this is irrevocably changing that, unfortunately."

He added that he's grateful for the roughly 60% of Beverly Hills firefighters who have been vaccinated. The plaintiffs are seeking damages, attorney's fees and an injunction preventing the county from enforcing the mandate. The lawsuit also requests judicial declarations that the mandate exceeds the county's powers under state law or is unconstitutional, that the mandate violates the right to privacy under the state

Constitution, that the city's practice of questioning those who request a religious exemption violates both the 1st Amendment and the mandate itself and must be ceased, and that the city can't take an adverse employment action against city firefighters without providing them with an opportunity to challenge it.

An organization called Protection of the Educational Rights of Kids, described as a group that has advocated for medical freedom and individual rights during the pandemic, is also listed as a plaintiff and is financially supporting the case, attorneys said. The group previously joined lawsuits challenging vaccine mandates for L.A. County workers and for Los Angeles Unified School District students.

It has also organized rallies against vaccine mandates, including one last month in Long Beach at which Sattley was listed as a speaker. That came on the heels of another rally that saw thousands of people, some of them municipal workers, gather outside Los Angeles City Hall to protest vaccine rules.

Other first responders have sought to halt vaccine mandates. Last week, a Superior Court judge denied a request by the Los Angeles Fire Department firefighters union for a preliminary injunction to delay enforcement of the city's vaccine mandate. In September, a separate group of 500 Los Angeles firefighters sued the city over its requirement that L.A. employees be vaccinated against COVID-19.

# Pasadena council districts under scrutiny

[Pasadena, from B1] And they say that making major changes to the map would have ripple effects that would disrupt intermingled Black and Latino communities that have a history of cooperation.

"The maps perform," Johnson said. "When districts are working and they're achieving the purposes of the Voting Rights Act, we try not to blow them up."

Like most elected government bodies, the Pasadena City Council is in the midst of redistricting, the once-every-decade redrawing of political lines that occurs after the U.S. Census Bureau releases new population counts.

Nationally, attention is laser-focused on the reconfiguring of congressional districts, which will influence control of the House after the 2022 elections. In California, redistricting is also being scrutinized as the state is losing a House seat for the first time in its history.

Receiving less attention is the redrawing of district lines for city councils, county boards of supervisors, school district boards of education and other local government panels.

In Pasadena, the City Council is scheduled to vote on Monday on the proposed map.

The city's consultants say each district touches Colorado Boulevard, the 230 Freeway divided minority communities from the rest of the city.

In recent decades, the districts' map "is a way of not maintaining the damage that the freeway did to those northwestern communities — not isolating them from downtown Pasadena, from the business areas of Pasadena," Ely said.

He also said that the proposed map includes three districts where Latinos have a significant say over who represents them. While none contain a population of more than 50% Latino voting-age citizens, they greatly outnumber other blocs of voters.

"The numbers are such that if the Latino community in any of those districts was unhappy with their representation and wanted to strongly challenge with a different candidate, they most certainly could win," Ely said.



PASADENA'S council districts all touch Colorado Boulevard, a practice experts say may dilute voter voices.

cutting any argument that there is a racially discriminatory effect under the VRA in Pasadena," the memo says. As in many parts of Southern California, Black Americans' moving patterns and the growth of Latino and Asian American populations have greatly changed the demographic makeup of Pasadena, a city of about 40,000.

"If everyone's in charge, no one's in charge. Nobody's pushing our issues. Nobody. They don't go to bat for us."

— MARSHA ROOD, vice president of the Downtown Pasadena Neighborhood Assn., speaking about the City Council

In the first decade of this century, the Black population of Pasadena declined 24% to about 14,650 people. It's now a little more than 22,500, according to the census.

Latino makeup up about 46,000 of the city's residents, of which 4 out of 5 are of voting age.

Residents of Asian descent account for about 26,500 residents, with about 90% eligible to vote.

Her current way of life — walking to get groceries or to see a movie — is different than residents of the city's less urban neighborhoods, she said.

"We are a community of interest that's different than any other part of Pasadena," Rood said.

Additionally, much of the development occurring in the city is taking place downtown. Developers with deep pockets contribute to multiple council members, while the residents do not have a single council member responsible for their concerns, Rood said.

Mitchell said this was a problematic structure.

Council members "get the benefit of donors but don't get the negative of complaining residents who are impacted by the development," he said. That results in a scenario "letting everyone have access to the

with city officials are not race-based.

It "takes a community of interest — residents concerned about traffic, noise, drunk people, crime — and splits them among multiple city council members, all of whom see their area as a fun entertainment piece," said Paul Mitchell, a Democratic redistricting expert. "But none of them have to make the concerns of these residents their top concern."

Rood, 77, agreed. The retiree started working for the city in 1982 and relocated there in 1988. She initially lived in a suburban area of Pasadena until moving downtown in 2000.

Her current way of life — walking to get groceries or to see a movie — is different than residents of the city's less urban neighborhoods, she said.

"We are a community of interest that's different than any other part of Pasadena," Rood said.

Additionally, much of the development occurring in the city is taking place downtown. Developers with deep pockets contribute to multiple council members, while the residents do not have a single council member responsible for their concerns, Rood said.

Mitchell said this was a problematic structure. Council members "get the benefit of donors but don't get the negative of complaining residents who are impacted by the development," he said. That results in a scenario "letting everyone have access to the

tough but not having anyone who really cares about the people who have to live there."

Ely said that he and others who worked on the city's redistricting proposal believe that consolidating downtown into one district would have been "highly disruptive," potentially eliminating a district with a large minority population. He also said it could diminish the voice of downtown residents.

"If the policy choices of that district were different than the rest of the council, then you'd get one representative who is losing all the time," he said.

Johnson added that it was imperative for all council members to have a vested interest in the city's core.

"It's the economic center. It's also, of course, the government center, the cultural center of the city, all those things are all on Colorado," he said. It's "so that no district felt left out of essentially the heart of the city."

José Del Rio III, a redistricting advocate for the nonprofit government reform group California Common Cause, said the city's rationale for having every district include part of Colorado Boulevard is irrelevant to the legal priorities that must be considered when drawing a new map, notably creating equal-size districts, not diluting minority voters and keeping similar communities together.

"Everybody has a piece of Colorado is not a criteria," he said.

# Man held in hit-run that killed girl, left 3 injured

ASSOCIATED PRESS

DESERT HOT SPRINGS, Calif. — A driver was arrested on suspicion of rear-ending a school bus in the Coachella Valley on Thursday and then plowing his Cadillac into a group of children walking home, killing a 9-year-old girl and injuring three other youngsters.

Robert Hanson, 87, of Desert Hot Springs was booked late Thursday on suspicion of vehicular manslaughter and hit-and-run resulting in death, according to the Riverside County Sheriff's Department inmate information website.

It wasn't immediately clear Friday whether he had an attorney to speak on his behalf.

The crash occurred shortly before 4 p.m. Thursday near Desert Hot Springs, north of Palm Springs.

Students from Julius Corstlin Elementary School had been dropped off at a bus stop and were walking home on an unmarked shoulder of the road when the 1994 white Cadillac rear-ended another school bus that was nearby, authorities said.

The Cadillac then drove around the bus, went onto the shoulder, hit a speed limit sign and struck four children, California Highway Patrol officials said.

Monica Gonzalez-Guzman, 9, of Desert Hot Springs died at the scene. An 8-year-old boy suffering from major injuries was taken to the hospital, the Highway Patrol said, and a 12-year-old girl was treated at the scene for minor injuries.

Hanson also was taken to the hospital for examination.

The crash was under investigation, but the Highway Patrol had ruled out driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs as a factor, the Desert Sun in Palm Springs reported.

"It is overwhelming to hear and process this kind of tragic news," Mike Swize, superintendent of the Palm Springs Unified School District, said in a statement.

He added: "We want our families and staff to know that we are doing everything we can to provide any support they need now or in the coming days and weeks ahead."





**Jonathan  
Edwards**

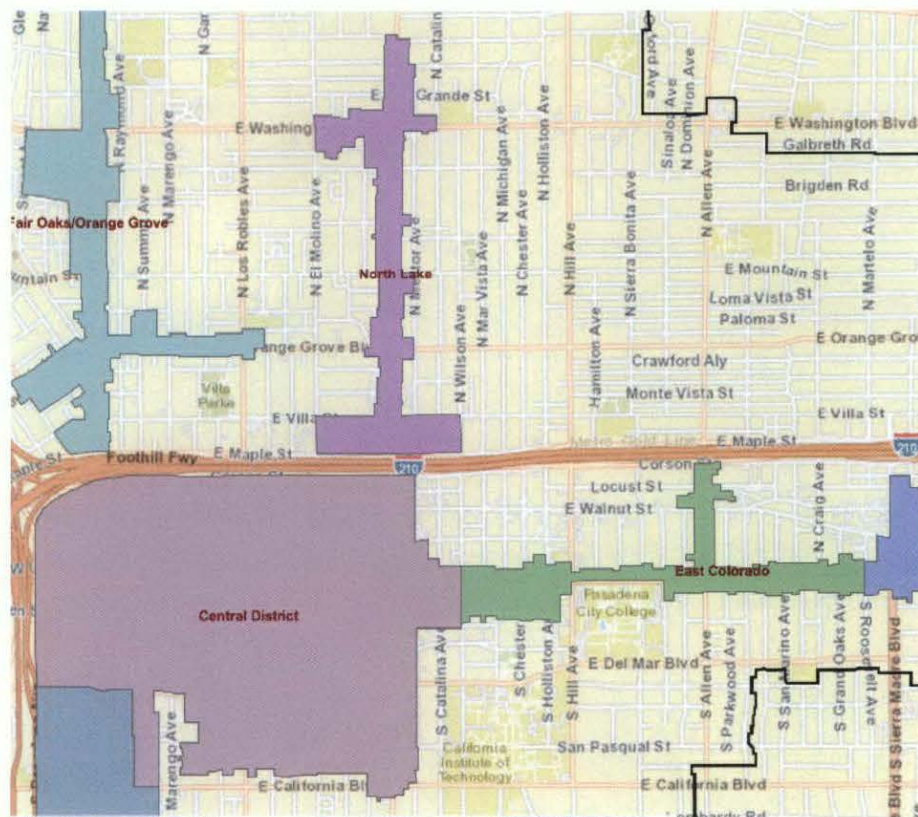
Sunday, December 12, 2021

[a version of this letter was submitted to the Redistricting Task Force on Sept 15th, 2021]

Mayor & City Council  
City of Pasadena

Colorado Boulevard should no longer be the “dividing line” around which Pasadena’s City Council districts are divided. This arrangement explicitly splits the communities of interest that are orientated around Colorado Boulevard, and puts Pasadena out of compliance with state law.

To see this, consider, for example, the East Colorado or North Lake Specific Plans. Clearly, those Specific Plan are draw with the primary arterial street as the *center*, the line that the area is *orientated around*. In those examples, the commercial uses that *surround both sides* of those major streets is what defines the area.



Colorado Blvd does not *divide* the community like the 210 Freeway, which is impassable and crossed by bridges. It is not a chasm or a river like the Arroyo Seco; it is the *opposite*.

To split and separate the North side of Colorado Blvd from the South side of Colorado Blvd is “cracking” because Colorado Blvd is exactly what *unifies* the areas that surround each section.

The same applies for Lake, Lincoln, and Fair Oaks.



Clearly, the residents & business owners in our Specific Plan Areas have always constituted separate Communities of Interest. Residents, workers, and property owners on *both* sides of East Colorado, for example, have a greater interest (compared to visitors) in sidewalks & streets, trash services, parking management, signage, tree canopy, safety, the pedestrian experience, etc on *both* sides of that stretch of Colorado Blvd. Having a councilperson who represents more than just a “piece” of the area and who is attuned to the area’s needs is better than being split and neglected.



Recently, moreover, our General Plans of the last few decades has increasingly directed *residential* multifamily development into our Specific Plan Areas, so the need to have cohesive representation in Specific Plan Areas is of increasing importance to residents, not just commercial interests.

The residents who live in and nearby our mixed-use Specific Plan Areas have unique needs & goals related to life in these walkable urban village centers.



With shops & restaurants, workplaces, and other commercial destinations within walking distance, the urban resident has less need to drive & park, and more need for safe sidewalks and dependable transportation. Indeed, that is a primary goal of planning efforts, to reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled and to encourage more sustainable modes of transportation. Residents in and nearby our Specific Plan Areas, therefore, need councilpersons who “get it” and who are attuned to those unique needs.

The Colorado Blvd dividing line is *harming* our urban residents and business owners in the Central District and East Pasadena by splitting these communities and entrenching representation that is focused elsewhere.

As a resident of Downtown Pasadena, in the Central District, I enjoy living without the need for a car, being able to walk to the Gold Line, Laemmle, Trader Joes, Macy's, City Hall, Old Pasadena, and the many other destinations that are split among 4 separate council districts. Yet I'm frustrated by inaction, lack of prioritization, and foot-dragging on the needs of Downtown Pasadena.



Colorado Blvd must no longer be the automatic, unexamined boundary of council districts. The notion that all seven council districts must get a "piece" of Colorado Blvd cannot serve as an organizing principle because it splits Communities of Interest and deprives residents and business owners of equal representation.

The deliberations of the Redistricting Task Force and Council reflect the overall endemic disease that has characterized Pasadena politics for the last decade or more: a crippling fear of “Change” or “Disruption,” complacency with the status quo, and a lack of an ambitious positive vision for the future.

Sincerely yours,

Jonathan Edwards