

Community of Interest Testimony to the OC Board of Supervisors

Hi, my name is Rashad Al-Dabbagh and I am speaking on behalf of the Arab American Civic Council.

Our organization builds Arab American community power by facilitating their civic participation in Orange County. In addition, we are a member of the People's Redistricting Alliance, a coalition of community-based organizations established to promote a greater community voice in statewide and local redistricting processes here in Orange County.

Our community of interest is the Arab community. Arab Americans in Orange County are diverse in culture and faith, and originate from more than a dozen countries in the Middle East and North Africa region. The Arab community is also diverse in its socioeconomic status, education levels, and immigration status. Some came as refugees or asylum seekers, others for better opportunities. The Arab community in Orange County is bound together by a shared history, language, and geography.

While our community is scattered around Orange County, there's a significant number of residents in West Anaheim around what is unofficially known as Little Arabia, which is on and around Brookhurst Street primarily between Crescent Avenue and Katella Avenue. Little Arabia is home to more than one hundred small businesses, including ethnic grocery stores, restaurants, cafes, hair salons, as well as religious institutions such as the West Coast Islamic Society, and nonprofit organizations and social service organizations that serve the community in various capacities.

Anaheim's Little Arabia is a cultural destination, and safe space for Arabic-speaking immigrants as well as other immigrants and refugees from the Greater Middle Eastern region.

It is important that the Arab community be taken into consideration in the new district maps. Our community, like many other communities, works together to support one another, share resources, and advocate for its needs. It is important that Little Arabia be kept whole because of the shared social needs of the community and the needs of small business owners. Thank you.