

Community of Interest Testimony to the Orange County Board of Supervisors

Introduction:

Hi, my name is Otniel Pavia. I am writing on behalf of the Orange County Voter Information Project or OCVIP. OCVIP is a nonprofit, non-partisan organization that aims to facilitate the voter registration process and inform voters about the importance of civic engagement. OCVIP does this through presentations, dialogue, canvassing, phone banking, text messaging, and email programs. Increasing voter turnout is the key to making Orange County more representative of its constituents, their beliefs, values, and personal situations. Because redistricting can promote or limit effective civic engagement, we are a member of the People's Redistricting Alliance, a coalition of 16 community-based organizations established to promote a greater community voice in statewide and local redistricting processes here in Orange County.

My community is:

The Cypress Street Barrio. The Barrio's development was closely tied to the citrus industry and its Mexican American workers, and it was well established in Orange by 1920. The barrio's transformation from a rural picker village to an urban blue-collar barrio parallels urbanization patterns of other citrus colonias ("villages") in Orange County. Today, there are families living here that have lived here for over 4 generations. Many residents living here have ties to Mexico particularly from the states of Jalisco, Michoacan, and Zacatecas. Needless to say, the Cypress Street Barrio residents have seen Orange change and have a different perspective of the development and population growth around them.

My community is located:

Cypress Street Barrio, is located near the northwest corner of the Old Town Orange National Register and local register historic districts, the center of the community or *barrio* consists of the 400 block of North Cypress Street between Sycamore and Walnut Avenues. The approximate boundaries of the extent of the Cypress Street Barrio are Rose Avenue to the north, Glassell Street to the east, Almond Street to the south and the railroad tracks to the west.

My community is similar to the following neighborhoods:

Our community, as mentioned, is similar to communities who also share origins through their agricultural history. Since the late 1940s and 1950s, the residential nature of the Cypress Street Barrio has diminished. Access to housing choices throughout the cities, decreased dependence upon jobs in the citrus or other agricultural industries, and the increasingly industrial nature of the neighborhood, have all contributed to residents leaving the places they once called home. Residents that do continue to live in the neighborhood today are generally recent immigrants from Mexico and South America. With that said, the Cypress Street Barrio community shares a lot of similarities with the east side of Garden Grove and Santa Ana.

My community is different from the following neighborhoods:

Our community is different in the sense that we are not like the rest of Orange. When you think of the City of Orange, you think Olde Towne Orange, historic buildings, college town; people seldom think of the areas where low-income families reside--especially when you're located next to a well-known expensive private university. People also think of Villa Park because it is a city within a city! The area that makes up the barrio has census tracts that are very low-income compared to those on the east end of the city.

What makes my community special is:

Our local community is full of rich history--good and bad. As mentioned, many of the old buildings from the '20s are still up; however, many of the residents that helped grow the local economy are gone. While some remain, many newcomers arrive and live in the same neighborhoods that agricultural workers used to live in. A lot of them do not have the choice to go elsewhere because sometimes it is the *more affordable* area to settle in.

In conclusion:

We need better representation for our communities living in low-income Census tracts. A lot of these folks seldom think how something like redistricting will impact them but the more affluent communities do. That is why we expect more of these individuals to attempt to sway your perceptions of our community because they'll say they are part of it when they do not even live with or near us or share similar backgrounds and struggles. In this next round of redistricting, we need to make sure that our barrio is not split apart like it is. As a community we find that it'd be better for low-income working class families, like those living in the Cypress Street Barrio, to be drawn in with Santa Ana and East Garden Grove when boundaries are redrawn.