



**TESTIMONY BY THE ASIAN AMERICAN INSTITUTE BEFORE
THE ILLINOIS SENATE AND HOUSE REDISTRICTING COMMITTEES
MAY 24, 2011**

Submitted By:

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The Asian American community has actively participated in redistricting hearings and meetings with legislators for years so that history does not repeat itself and our community does not suffer from devastating harm due to redistricting in Illinois. You have heard AAI and representatives of Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, Korean, Nepali, and many other communities explain their cohesive communities and the need for our voting rights to be respected. Through our mapping and demographic analysis, we have shown that it is possible to draw strong Asian American influence districts with little or no fragmentation of Asian American neighborhoods while still respecting the voting rights of other minority communities.

Asian American Institute (AAI) has partnered with many community-based organizations and community leaders to define our neighborhood boundaries on the north side of Chicago and nearby suburbs. AAI has demonstrated that that these areas are unique and cohesive according to many factors aside from race, and the neighborhoods or clusters have been defined by numerous people who live, work, and serve community members there. We have provided district map proposals through our coalition work with United Congress of Community and Religious Organizations to show that it is possible to draw strong Asian American influence districts in northern Cook County (including a Senate district with over 25% Asians and two House districts with over 25% Asians each) and also cause little or no fragmentation of Asian American neighborhoods. We have submitted numerous testimonies and demographic analyses detailing the characteristics and socioeconomic concerns of our community, available on our website at aaichicago.org.

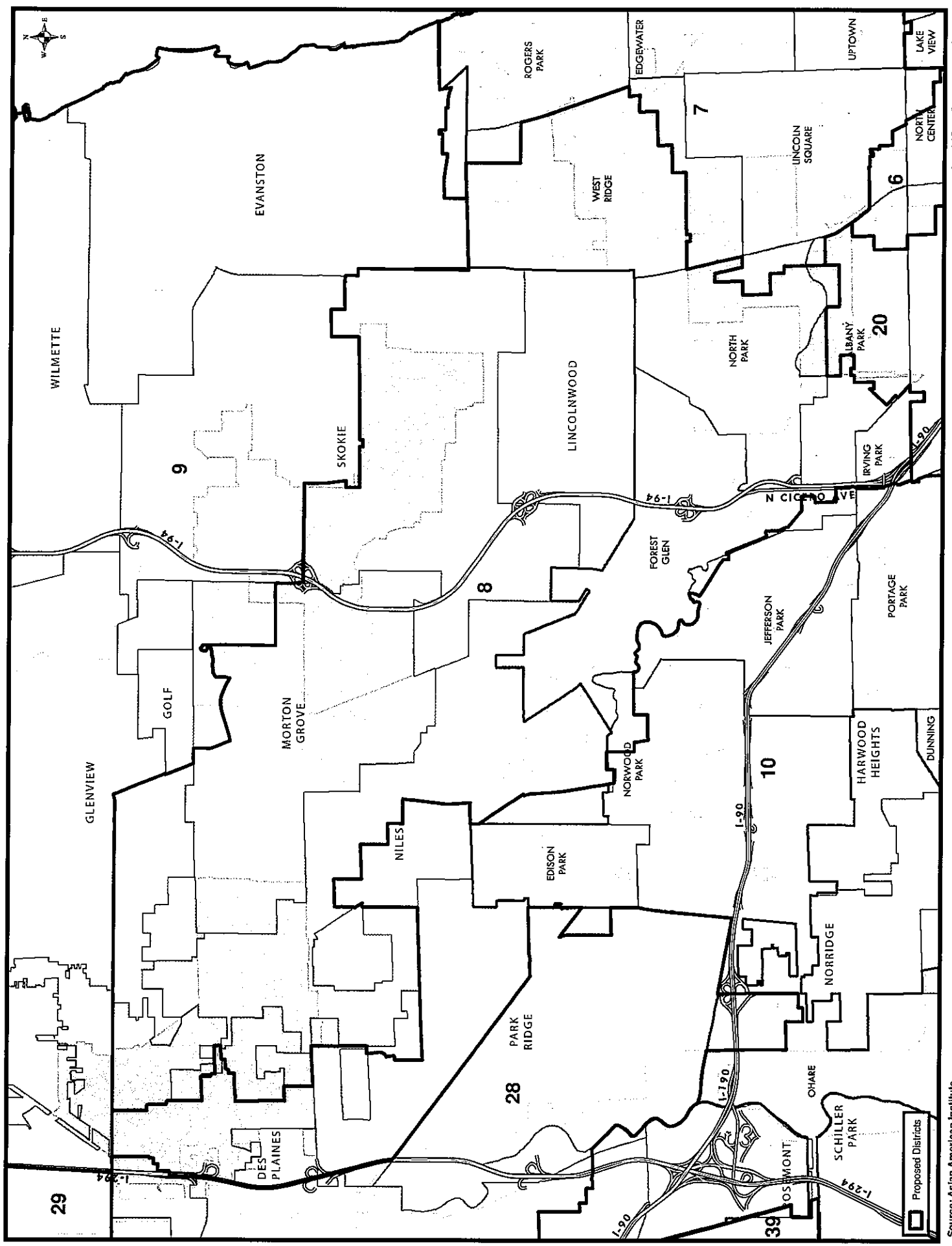
We are encouraged that the recent map proposals keep Chinatown largely intact and draw Senate District 8 to have 23% Asian Americans and House Districts 15 and 16 to have 20% and 25% Asian Americans, respectively. We are, however, dismayed to see that the maps proposed by the Senate and House cause the Asian American community in the current Senate Districts 8, 9, and 28 to become further fragmented into Senate Districts 7, 8, 9, and 10, with portions also in additional districts. Similarly, the Asian American community in the current House Districts 15, 16, 17, and 57 is becoming further fragmented into House Districts 13, 15, 16, 17, and 20, with portions also in additional



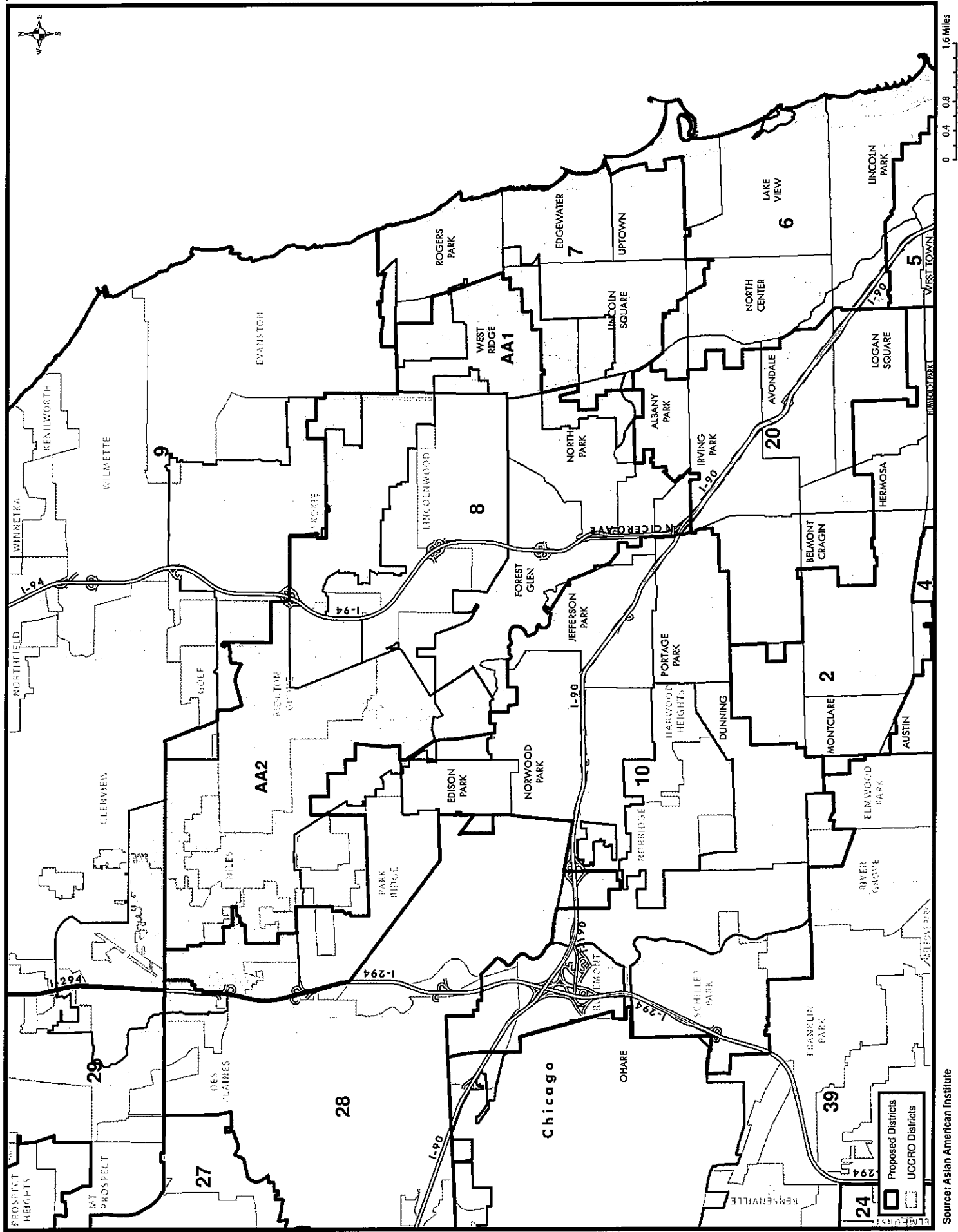
districts. As just one example of a fragmented neighborhood, the proposed lines fragment the greater West Ridge area just as much as the current lines do, even though this area contains a similar percentage and density of Asians as Chinatown – with similar socioeconomic concerns and the need for responsiveness from legislators to address community needs. This fragmentation of our community will dilute the Asian American vote and harm our ability to elect the candidates of our choice.

We urge the Senate and House Redistricting Committees and the entire Illinois General Assembly to take another careful look at the fragmentation of our communities, as demonstrated by the attached maps. We request you to be mindful of Asian Americans' legal right to have votes that count, particularly under the new Illinois Voting Rights Act. We ask you to revise the map so that our communities are in fewer Senate and House districts while also drawing at least one Senate district and two House districts on the north side to be at least 25% Asian American. We stand in solidarity with other minority communities whose voting rights must also be protected during this redistricting cycle. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

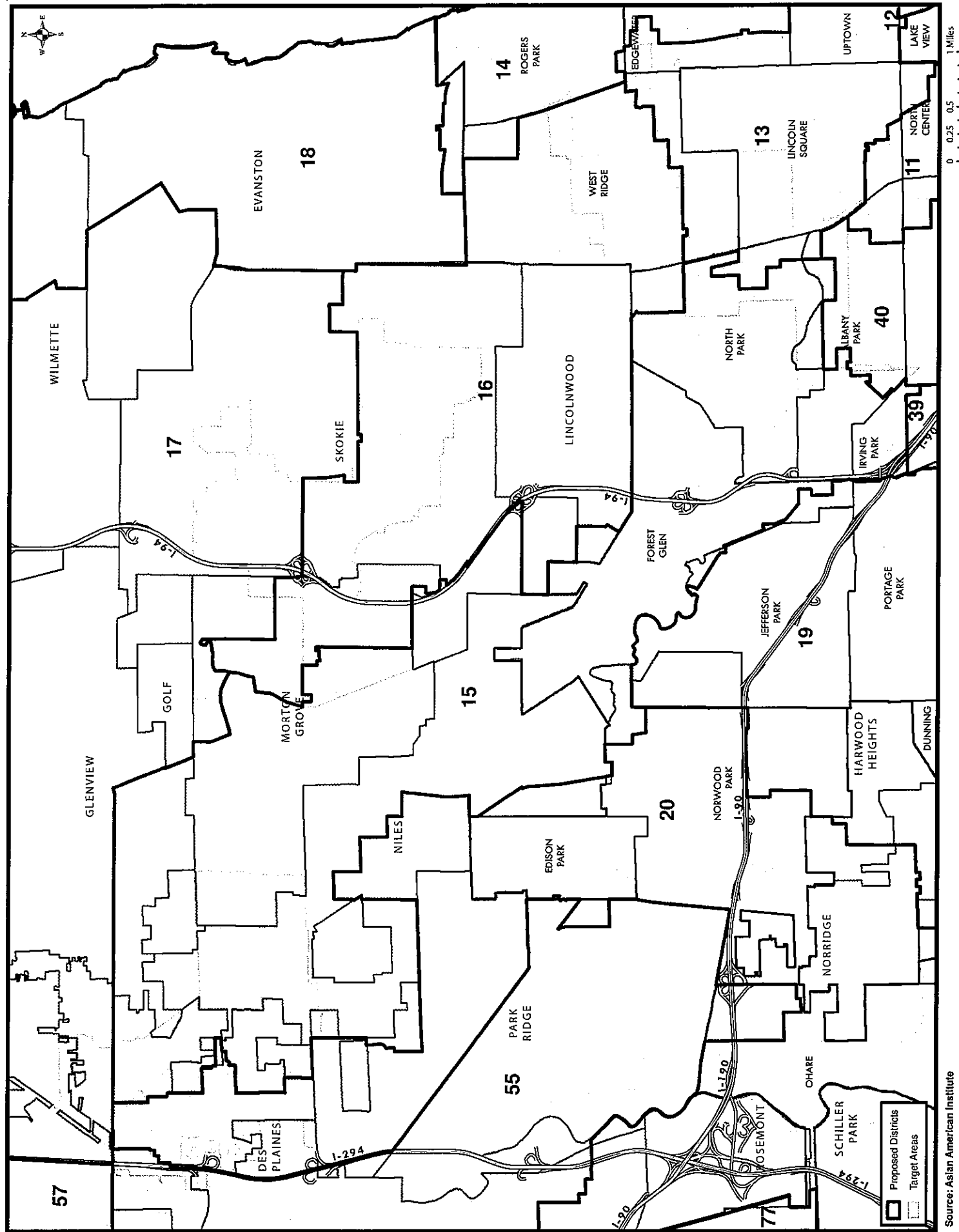
AAI Target Areas & Proposed IL Senate Boundaries



UCCRO Districts & Proposed IL Senate Boundaries



AAI Target Areas & Proposed IL House Boundaries



UCCRO Districts & Proposed IL House Boundaries

