



Queens Civic Congress

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QUEENS CIVICS TESTIFY ON CITY LANDMARKING PROCESS

Prepared and Presented
By
James Trent, Treasurer
to
City Council Subcommittee on Landmarks, Dispositions and Consents
on
The Landmarks Preservation Commission
Queens Borough Hall

My name is James Trent, I am an officer of the Queens Civic Congress, an umbrella organization of some 100 civic associations from every part of Queens. The QCC has been very involved in the preservation of our suburban-style neighborhoods. It is these communities of private homes on large lots which have most been under attack by present building boom. We have been instrumental in getting contextual zoning for whole swaths of Queens, and there are many more neighborhoods in the pipeline. We have also been active in getting loopholes closed by creating new zoning categories such as the R2A.

However, there are some neighborhoods which due to their history and architectural worth cry out for more than contextual zoning. They need landmarking. Queens is reputed to have more planned communities than any where else in America. College textbooks on architecture and city planning all reference Queens. Yet where is this important history being preserved in any meaningful way?

It took seven years to get Douglas Manor designated, and 14 years for a mere 31 homes in Douglaston Hill. Richmond Hill, perhaps the first planned community in Queens, has gotten nowhere, and Kew Gardens is in the same boat. Sunnyside Gardens continues to wait for designation, although at least the LPC has indicated that it will at some point designate. Jackson Heights took a lot of convincing and the designation doesn't go far enough west.

Meantime Jamaica Estates, an extraordinary community, hasn't gotten designation. Now Broadway-Flushing with its 1,300 homes is seeking designation and because of the workload this presents that community can only hold its breath as developers try to violate the deed restrictions on those homes. At some point the local civic association may not be able to defend these covenants because of the high cost of litigation.

In terms of individual landmarks, we are watching as the bulldozers flattened our history with impunity. The Mott House in Far Rockaway is gone, and St. Saviour's Church, an 1847 structure in Maspeth is probably coming down very soon since the demolition permit has already been issued.

We are frankly tired of running to LPC with last minute pleas for designation as the bulldozers pull up to these historic structures. Why hasn't the LPC surveyed Queens, and for that matter, the rest of the City so that we can determine before it is too late those structures and neighborhoods that need to be saved by designation? The LPC is overburdened and overwhelmed. Chairman Tierney said at a City Council hearing last month that some 300 nominations are received each year. The LPC needs more staff and more space in which to house that extra staff.

But we sometimes suspect that something more than lack of money is behind Queens lagging behind. Is there a bias at the LPC against wooden homes, and neighborhoods of free-standing homes designed by a variety of architects? Why is it that the LPC thinks that Seventh Avenue South in the Greenwich Village Historic District has a sense of place, but not Richmond Hill? Has anybody really taken a look at Seventh Avenue South? It is baffling how that stretch made the cut, and yet Queens streets seem required to achieve a higher standard.

We implore the City Council to provide the necessary funds and to convince the Mayor to spend the money on the LPC, not impound it. And we think the LPC needs to better realize that all styles of architecture and all periods of history need to be represented in its portfolio of landmarked buildings and districts.

Thank you.

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The entire Queens Civic Congress Platform may be viewed on the internet at:
<http://www.queensciviccongress.org/Platform/final2004Platform-forvote.pdf>

Queens Civic Congress Members

Bayside Civic Database ♦ Bayside Hills Civic Association ♦ Bayswater Civic Association ♦ Bay Terrace Community Alliance, Inc. ♦ Bellaire-Bell Vill Civic Association ♦ Belle Harbor Property Owners Association ♦ Bellerose Commonwealth Civic Association ♦ Bellerose Hillside Civic Association ♦ Bell Park Manor Terrace Community Council ♦ Bowne Park Civic Association ♦ Briarwood Community Association ♦ Broadway-Flushing Homeowners ♦ Cambria Heights Civic Association ♦ Cherry Robinson Homeowners ♦ C.O.M.E.T. (Communities of Maspeth-Elmhurst Together) ♦ Concerned Citizens of Laurelton ♦ Creedmoor Civic Association ♦ Doug-Bay Manor Civic Association ♦ Douglas Manor Association ♦ Douglaston Civic Association ♦ Dutch Kills Civic Assn. of Long Island City ♦ East Flushing Civic Association ♦ Federated Block Associations of Laurelton ♦ Federation of Civic Associations of Southeast Queens ♦ Floral Park Community Council ♦ Flushing Heights Civic Association ♦ Flushing on the Hill Taxpayers Association ♦ Flushing Suburban Civic Association ♦ Forest Hills Chamber of Commerce ♦ Forest Hills Crescents Association ♦ Forest Hills-Van Court Association ♦ Fresh Meadows Homeowners Association ♦ Georgetown Mews ♦ Glen Oaks Village Owners, Inc. ♦ Greater Astoria Historical Society ♦ Greater Whitestone Taxpayers Civic Association ♦ Harding Heights Civic Association ♦ Hillcrest Estates Civic Association ♦ Hilltop Village Co-Op #1 ♦ Hilltop Village Co-Op #2 ♦ Hilltop Village Co-Op #3 ♦ Hilltop Village Co-Op #4 ♦ Hollis Hills Civic Association ♦ Holliswood Civic Association ♦ Hollis Park Gardens Civic

Association ♦ Holly Civic Association ♦ Hunters Point Community Coalition ♦ Hyde Park Owners Corp. ♦ Jackson Heights Beautification Group ♦ Jamaica Estates Association ♦ Jamaica Hill Community Association ♦ Juniper Park Civic Association ♦ Kew Forest Neighborhood Association ♦ Kew Gardens Civic Association ♦ Kew Gardens Hills Homeowners Association ♦ Kissena Park Civic Association ♦ Little Neck Bay Civic Association ♦ Little Neck Pines ♦ Lost Community Civic Association ♦ Malba Civic Association ♦ Middle Village Property Owners Association ♦ Mitchell Linden Civic Association ♦ Neponsit Property Owners ♦ Newtown Civic Association ♦ North Bellerose Civic Association ♦ North Flushing Civic Association ♦ North Hills Estates Civic Association ♦ Northwest Clearview Homeowners Association ♦ Norwood Civic Association ♦ Oakland Gardens/Terrace Community Council ♦ Off Broadway Homeowners Association ♦ Old Forest Hills, Association of ♦ Our Neighborhood Improvement Association ♦ Ozone Tudor Civic Association ♦ Parkway Village Historical Society ♦ Queensboro Hill Neighborhood Association ♦ Queens Colony Civic Association ♦ Queens Community Civic Corp. ♦ Queens Village Civic Association ♦ Ramblersville-Hawtree Civic Association ♦ Richmond Hill Historical Society ♦ Ridgewood Property Owners Association ♦ Rockaway Action Committee ♦ Rocky Hill Civic Association ♦ Rosedale Civic Association ♦ Royal Ranch, Inc. ♦ Sagamore Douglaston Civic Association ♦ South East Queens Concerned Neighbors ♦ South Ozone Park Civic Association West ♦ Springfield/Rosedale Community Action Association ♦ Harrison Place Homeowners/Sunnyside Gardens ♦ Surrey Estates Civic Association ♦ The New Property Civic Association ♦ Union Turnpike Merchants Association ♦ United Forties Civic Association ♦ United Neighbors Civic Association ♦ Utopia Estates Civic Association ♦ Village Mall at Hillcrest Condominium ♦ Waldheim Neighborhood Association ♦ Wayanda Civic Association ♦ West Cunningham Park Civic Association ♦ Westmoreland Association ♦ Woodside Community Council