



# Queens Civic Congress

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November 30, 2007

Dear Queens Civic Congress member,

In October, the Queens Civic Congress executive board unanimously approved amending the proposed Department of City Planning proposed [Yards Text](#) Zoning Amendment, which is currently going through the ULURP process. We need your support to make sure the Yards Text gets adopted in a version that best serves community needs. On October 11, the Queens Civic Congress [wrote](#) to each Queens Community Board, City Planning Commission Chair Amanda Burden, Queens City Planning Director John Young, Queens Borough President Helen Marshall and City Council Speaker Christine Quinn to support needed improvements of the Department of City Planning Commission's Yard Text Amendment. On behalf of our members, Queens Civic Congress had long advocated these reforms. While the current form of the text amendments does not meet all our [CIVIC 2030](#) Platform demands, Queens Civic Congress support yards text with the following necessary amendments:

- 1) Reduce the front yard fence from the proposed four feet to three feet and require that it be 50% open. In addition, the front fence rule needs to apply to all corner houses for both their yards facing the street. (The proposed text language is unclear for the second front yard).
- 2) Require the proposed 50% planting for the entire property not just for the front yard in R 1, R 2, and R 3 zones. 50% is a very low percentage for any portion of the property. Aesthetics is not the only issue at stake. Environmental circumstances dictate the need for private green space to clean our air, help moderate the air temperature, and prevent flooding.

Please send a letter – on your civic letterhead – to City Planning Commission Chair Amanda Burden, DCP, 22 Reade Street, NY, NY 1007 with a copy to QCC, P.O. Box 263, Flushing, NY 11363, your Council Member and the Borough President (See the following sample letter.).

**Sample Yards Text letter  
to City Planning Commission Chair Amanda Burden, your  
Council Member and the Borough President**

*We write on behalf of the [Insert name of your Civic] in support of the Yards Amendment with the following necessary changes as advocated by the Queens Civic Congress:*

- *Reduce the front yard fence from the proposed four feet to three feet and require that it be 50% open. In addition, the front fence rule needs to apply to all corner houses for both their yards facing the street. (The proposed text language is unclear for the second front yard).*
- *Require the proposed 50% planting for the entire property not just for the front yard in R 1, R 2, and R 3 zones. 50% is a very low percentage for any portion of the property. Ascetics is not the only issue at stake. Environmental circumstances dictate the need for private green space to clean our air, help moderate the air temperature, and prevent flooding.*

*We believe the aforementioned reforms will make the Yards Text a truly compelling revision to the City's Zoning Resolution.*

*May we count on you for your support to these needed reforms?*

*Sincerely,  
[NAME]*

[end sample letter]

Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

*COREY*

COREY BEARAK  
President

c. Patricia Dolan, Executive Vice President  
Planning and Land Use chair (718 263-1760)

Paul Kerzner, Vice President  
Legislation Committee chair

#### **Queens Civic Congress Members**

Association of Old Forest Hills ♦ Auburndale Improvement Association ♦ Bayside Civic Database ♦ Bayside Clear-Spring Council ♦ Bayside Hills Civic Association ♦ Bayswater Civic Association ♦ Bay Terrace Community Alliance, Inc. ♦ Bellaire-BellVill 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 ♦ Cambria Heights Civic Association ♦ Civic Association of Utopia Estates ♦ C.O.M.E.T. (Communities of Maspeth-Elmhurst Together) ♦ Concerned Citizens of Laurelton ♦ Cornucopia Society ♦ Creedmoor Civic Association ♦ Deerfield Area 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 ♦ Forest Hills Chamber of Commerce ♦ Forest Hills Crescents Association ♦ Forest Hills-Van Court Association ♦ Fresh Meadows Homeowners Association ♦ Georgetown Mews ♦ Glendale Civic Association of Queens ♦ 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 11423 Block Association ♦ Hollis Hills Civic Association ♦ Holliswood Civic Association ♦ Hollis Park Gardens Civic Association ♦ Holly Civic Association ♦ Hyde Park Gardens Cooperative ♦ Jackson Heights Beautification Group ♦ Jamaica Estates Association ♦ Jamaica Hill Community Association ♦ Juniper Park Civic Association ♦ Kew Gardens Civic Association ♦ Kew Gardens Hills Homeowners Association ♦ Kew Gardens Improvement Association ♦ Kissena Park Civic Association ♦ Little Neck Bay Civic Association ♦ Little Neck Pines ♦ Long Island City Alliance ♦ Malba Civic Association ♦ Meadowlark Gardens Owners ♦ Middle Village Property Owners Association ♦ Mitchell Linden Civic Association ♦ Neponsit Property Owners Association ♦ Newtown Civic Association ♦ North Bellerose Civic Association ♦ North Flushing Civic Association ♦ North Hills Estates Civic Association ♦ Northwest Clearview Civic Association ♦ Norwood Civic Association ♦ Oakland Terrace/ Gardens Community Council ♦ Off Broadway Homeowners Association ♦ Our Neighborhood Improvement Association ♦ Our Neighbors Civic Association of Ozone Park, Inc. ♦ 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 and Civic Association ♦ Rockaway Park Homeowners/ Residents ♦ Rocky Hill Civic Association ♦ Rosedale Civic Association ♦ Royal Ranch Association. ♦ Southeast Queens Concerned Neighbors ♦ South Ozone Park West Civic Association ♦ Springfield/Rosedale Community Action Association ♦ Station Road Civic Assoc. of Auburndale ♦ Sunnyside Gardens/Harrison Place Homeowners ♦ Surrey Estates Civic Association ♦ Union Turnpike Merchants Association ♦ United Forties Civic Association ♦ United Neighbors Civic Association ♦ Waldheim Neighborhood Association ♦ Wayanda Civic Association ♦ West Cunningham Park Civic Association ♦ Westmoreland Association ♦ Woodside Community Council

## DCP Yards Text Amendment

The Department of City Planning is proposing amendments to the Zoning Resolution relating to yard regulations for residential developments. Although the current regulations prescribe minimum requirements relating to location and size of yards, they generally do not deal with the amount of paving and planting in the yards. In addition, the current regulations are in some cases unclear and do not deal with fences and steps. Some of these issues are now dealt with in the zoning regulations for Lower Density Growth Management Areas (LDGMA) in Staten Island and Community Board 10 in the Bronx, and are now proposed to be extended city-wide. The proposal would also help achieve some of the goals of the Mayor PlaNYC.

- Front yards are not currently required to be planted. Front yards in many new developments are completely paved to provide space for parking and driveways and similar situations have become common in front yards of existing homes. The proposal would require a minimum percentage of planting in front yards in R1 – R5 Districts, based upon street frontage, ranging from 20% for narrow lots (less than 20' wide) to 50% for lots 60 feet wide or greater.
- Currently, except in LDGMAs, interior lots within 100 feet of a corner and on the short end of a block do not have to provide rear yards. The proposal would require rear yards for all interior lots.
- The proposal would require a 30 foot open area behind every building segment (rowhouse) to ensure a useable rear yard, whether or not a rear yard is required. (Existing LDGMA rule)
- On corner lots in R1 – R5 districts, require one side yard to be at least 20 feet wide (Existing LDGMA rule)
- Prohibit steeply sloped driveways. Maximum slope would be 11% (Existing LDGMA rule)
- To encourage parking in rear yard garages, the proposal would increase floor area bonus for detached garage in rear yard from 100 square feet to 300 square feet in all R3, R4 and R5 districts (Existing in LDGMA)
- Prohibit required parking spaces from locating in the required front yard in R1 and R2 districts
- Reduce allowable front yard fence and wall height in R1- R5 districts from 8 feet to 4 feet, except that on corner lots, permit a height of 6 feet where a front yard overlaps a side yard
- Steps in front yards would be restricted in height to the first story above a basement
- Clarify how rear yard regulations are applied on irregularly shaped lots with more than one rear lot line, and on large corner lots. Existing zoning requires only one rear yard. The proposal would require additional rear yards under clearly defined parameters. A BSA special permit would be created to modify or waive the additional rear yard requirements where there are site planning constraints.
- For curb cuts serving paired driveways, increase maximum width from 15 feet to 18 feet, and establish a minimum width of 15 feet. This will ensure better access to driveways, a greater chance the 16 foot spacing requirement between curb cuts will be maintained, and allow sufficient space for the minimum front yard planting requirements be met.
- Apply modified “transition” rule between high and low density developments. The current transition rule only applies when the zoning lot line and zoning district boundary line are coincident. The proposal requires a 35 foot height limit for developments in R6 – R10 district within 25 feet of a R1 through R5 district, and an 8 foot open area along the side lot line between the two developments. This regulation was recently adopted as part of the Special Downtown Jamaica District.