



Queens Civic Congress

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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TESTIMONY
on
YARD TEXT AMENDMENT
and
STREET TREE PLANTING AMENDMENT
to
CITY COUNCIL SUB-COMMITTEE ON ZONING

by
Patricia Dolan, Executive Vice President, Queens Civic Congress

April 15, 2008

The Queens Civic Congress is a borough-wide coalition of more than 100 neighborhood based civic groups representing tenants, homeowners, condo and co-op owners residing in every part of Queens.

Queens residents value streets with homes—even on narrow lots-- set back in landscaped yards. So, we have rued the loss of that open green space as property owners have increasingly paved over yards for parking and built oversized exterior staircases. The aesthetic price of excessive paving is high; the environmental price of losing runoff in major rainstorms is potentially disastrous, especially in areas like south-east Queens where storm sewers are a promise, not a reality.

We applaud the Department of City Planning's proposed Yard Amendments, which will limit some of the most egregious construction in lower density residential districts. However, the Department did not go far enough. At least 80% landscaping should be required for lots in R-1, R-2 and R-2A districts and at least 60% for narrower lots. The maximum height of fencing should be three feet. As a matter of safety lower height limits should be required for corner lots and along property abutting community driveways.

Trees are Queens' glory; Queens civic groups have been major advocates of the Parks Department's forestry programs for years. We do, however, have reservations regarding the proposed street tree planting amendment. The proposed distance between trees is too great. The prevailing low-density housing configuration in Queens is one lot or twenty feet; trees should be spaced so each homeowner may have a tree in front of her home.

Asking a homeowner who enlarges his property to plant a tree at her own cost is excessive, we think, especially when the tree reverts to city ownership. Asking a homeowner to plant a tree in front of someone else's home if there is no space in front of his is unreasonable.

We suggest that the Department rework the Tree Amendment to clarify what is unclear and to improve the requirements that seem unfair and burdensome.

Thank you.

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Patricia Dolan may be reached at (718) 268-5960 during business hours.

[Note: The entire Queens Civic Congress [CIVIC 2030](http://queensciviccongress.org/platform/CIVIC2030) Platform may be viewed on the internet at: <http://queensciviccongress.org/platform/CIVIC2030.pdf> – Queens Civic Congress [Membership](http://queensciviccongress.org/organization/members.php) may be viewed at <http://queensciviccongress.org/organization/members.php>.]