



Queens Civic Congress

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June 30, 2008

Hon. Michael Bloomberg
Mayor
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mr. Mayor:

On behalf of Queens Civic Congress, we write again concerning the need for your administration, particularly its Department of City Planning, to accelerate protective efforts to preserve under- and unprotected Queens neighborhoods. Queens Civic Congress welcomes the May 13 reply from City Planning Chair Amanda Burden, the first response in at least three years to numerous letters from our members regarding needed neighborhood rezonings and new districts. While Queens communities welcomed an acceleration of protective initiatives in 2005, and the commencement of ULURP on rezonings noted in Planning Chair Burden's letter (Dutch Kills, The Rockaways, Waldheim and Laurelton), the pace of these efforts took a considerable backseat to development projects that consume many of the staff and other resources needed to continue the efforts that ceased since late 2005. The core request of the May 12 Queens Civic Congress letter remains to be addressed.

Ms. Burden's letter also lumps all rezonings in Queens, including those with undesirable and unfortunate consequences, which remain the core of your Planning Department's "ambitious agenda" cited by your Planning Chair. Please cease arguments that include rezonings the civic community and Queens residents sought to reform and the administration steadfastly used every resource at its command to push through. The Jamaica Plan serves as a prime example of your Planning Department leading a community down the garden path when in fact no intention ever existed to accommodate the very reasonable needs or aspirations of local residents – even when changes would not have affected the major goals of the (Jamaica) Plan. The proposals there represented sound improvements. DCP's endless studies needlessly delayed the progress we really needed on the Rockaways and, especially, Dutch Kills where tear-downs and hotels go hand-in-hand.

Queens Civic Congress offers some context because too many Planning Department actions to date suggest that City Hall lacks information it ought to be provided. This includes a core premise: Queens rezonings did not just happen. Queens Civic Congress, its predecessor organizations and its member organizations have advocated for specific neighborhoods for more than two decades. The first occurred under then Borough President Shulman during the Koch Administration; another 25 came about during your predecessor's administration. While your Planning Department continues at its current slower than a snail's pace, too many blocks in too many neighborhoods get overbuilt into "non-conformance."

Regarding new “One Family Narrow Lot”, “One Family Row House” and “R1A” zones by Queens Civic Congress, the Koch administration created low density contextual zones in less than six months; no reasonable explanation exists why your administration resists these clearly needed zoning reforms. Indeed, a non-professional Queens Civic Congress member created the R-2A text submitted for approval simultaneously with the Bayside zoning proposal; nothing prevents similar progress to protect R1-2 zoned communities, and row house and narrow lot neighborhoods. From the outset, your Planning Department welcomed AIA's zoning amendments but offers the usual “need to consider” excuses in response to the sound reforms proposed by Queens Civic Congress. If your planners want a professionally signed off proposal, let them make that clear. Many civic members in the affected communities express the view that City Hall's inaction to date reflect these communities in need not being quite so well off or as pale as the R2A candidates.

The non-response on community facilities constitutes a punt when the organized civic community offers no opposition to any siting but simply and correctly recommends that the bulk of any as of right structure conform to the bulk permitted under the existing zoning. To leave bulk issues to possible future rezonings in a neighborhood just perpetuates the existing crises as developers exploit the permissive environment that cries for reform.

In closing, your Planning Chair talks of “continuing our partnership” but a partnership requires real dialog and engagement that unfortunately Queens Civic Congress finds totally lacking. Please also view Queens Civic Congress platform, [CIVIC 2030](#) for land use and planning and related issues that remain of concern. For your convenience, attached please find the seven actions called for in the May 12, 2008 Queens Civic Congress letter.

Sincerely,

Corey Bearak

Corey B. Bearak
President

Patricia Dolan

Patricia Dolan
Executive Vice President/ Planning Chair

c. Hon. Helen Marshall
Amanda Burden
John Young, Queens DCP Director

View on-line:

*a copy of City Planning chair Amanda Burden's [response](#) to QCC's May 12, 2008 letter to the Mayor and

*a copy of the May12 [letter](#).

Comment, July 7, 2008, by Angela Augugliaro, President, Queens Colony Civic Association (Bellerose) on City Planning Chair Amanda Burden's response:

“This is the same rhetoric we have been receiving from [City Planning] for as long as we have been requesting a new zoning designation. I have not seen or heard anything from DCP that proves to me they are working towards any conclusion on a zoning designation for one family homes on narrow lots. They are still double talking us and not doing a thing towards a resolution of this request. In the meantime, developers are still changing one family homes to two family homes and by the time DCP finally decides to seriously (if ever) work towards this endeavor most of these communities will not qualify.”

Actions called for in the May 12 letter (asterisks follow items where ULURP has since commenced.):

1. Immediate City Planning Certification for ULURP of all pending and proposed rezonings not later than June 30. City Council adoption of of all contextual community downzoning (including but not limited to: Auburndale, Dutch Kills,* Floral Park, Glendale, Hollis Hills, Kew Gardens Hills, Laurelton,* Maspeth, North Flushing, Oakland Gardens, the entire Rockaway peninsula,* Rosedale, Waldheim/Holly* and sections of Bayside and Bellerose) applications not later than August 31, 2009.
2. City Council and City Planning Department file joint zoning applications within 30 days for additional contextual districts to cover un-protected and under-protected residential communities that lack appropriate or protective zoning designation(s) including but not limited to new One-Family Narrow Lot, One Family Row House, and "R1A" zones.
3. Landmarks Preservation Commission Calendaring of Queens locations for landmark designation as historic buildings, historic district and/ or historic spaces.
4. Allocate sufficient funds to the Landmarks Preservation Commission and Department of City Planning for staff to initiate and complete zoning studies and landmark designations.
5. End Self-Certification and Self-Inspection and require the Department of Buildings to follow zoning regulations and building codes rather create new interpretations that require new legislation to achieve the original intent meaning of laws. Even if the Department of Building implements this, pass legislation not later than August 31, 2008 to make this permanent.
6. Require an independent annual audit by the City Comptroller of all R1 through R6 NB and Alt applications to determine Building Department compliance with the requirement to end creative and new interpretations of zoning and codes.
7. Reform Community Facilities zoning to require a special permit for any bulk beyond what the existing zoning allows, not later that August 31, 2009.

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 Homeowners Association ♦ Norwood Civic Association ♦ Oakland Terrace/ Gardens Community Council ♦ Off Broadway Homeowners Association ♦ Our Neighborhood Improvement Association ♦ Our Neighbors 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