



Queens Civic Congress

P.O. Box 238, Flushing, NY 11363 (718) 343-6779 fax: (718) 225-3366
www.queensciviccongress.org queensciviccongr@aol.com

President:
Corey Bearak

Executive Vice President:
Patricia Dolan

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Contact:
Corey Bearak
(718) 343-6779

QUEENS CIVIC CONGRESS SUPPORTS FOREST HILLS (CORD MEYER) REZONING
Testimony at Queens Borough President's Hearing
April 2, 2009
by Patricia Dolan, Executive Vice President

Good morning. I am Patricia Dolan, executive vice-president of the Queens Civic Congress, an umbrella organization of more than 110 community and neighborhood associations representing tenants, business owners, co-op and condo owners and homeowners living in every part of Queens. I am also the president of the Kew Gardens Hills Civic Association.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Forest Hills (Cord Meyer) rezoning and the R-1-2A zoning text amendment.

Since its founding, the Queens Civic Congress has made neighborhood preservation and contextual zoning a key part of our advocacy. So we are especially pleased to be here in support of the Association of Old Forest Hills and the residents of Forest Hills who have striven so long for contextual zoning of their neighborhood.

The long awaited R-1-2A zone, which the Congress has supported for the past five years, adds another critically needed element to the planning and zoning toolbox that the city's lowest density neighborhoods need if they are to protect their unique and irreplaceable character. We look forward in the coming months to seeing more zoning plans completed for these lowest density neighborhoods. At the same time, we wish to remind you that other low-density neighborhoods continue to wait for text amendments that will protect one-family occupancy homes on narrow lots and one-family occupancy row houses.

The Forest Hills rezoning, utilizing the R-1-2A zone, presented challenges, which city planners and community leaders overcame. They have created a zoning plan that serves residents but allows for orderly growth. Every step of the way, they consulted their neighbors and the larger community. The new zone allows existing buildings to remain in place while preserving the generous traditional FAR that has long marked Local development.

Not once, until today, were charges of discrimination or bigotry thrown about in response to any of the almost fifty Queens rezonings.

Those fifty neighborhoods, like Forest Hills, are among the most diverse communities in Queens, the most diverse county in America. There is no place in this process for farfetched reckless charges that city planners or Forest Hills community's advocates for preservation are driven by anything but a high regard for the unique and irreplaceable physical character of the Cord Meyer section of Forest Hills. Nor is the proposed rezoning a "taking." The US Supreme Court has repeatedly upheld municipalities' authority to regulate land use through zoning plans such as the one being considered today.

We wish to thank Borough President Marshall for her leadership, which has preserved almost forty Queens neighborhoods and is a model for the other boroughs. And we extend a special thanks to John Young, director of the Queens office of City Planning and his staff, without whose dedicated and insightful guidance this plan would never have been completed. We also wish to extend our gratitude to Councilwoman Katz for her steadfast support of the local community's desire to protect one of the city's most charming and elegant neighborhood will be a source of inspiration for other low density neighborhoods in Queens and the other boroughs.

The Queens Civic Congress supports the plan to rezone the Cord Meyer section of Forest Hills.

Thank you.

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Queens Civic Congress Members

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