

# Queens Civic Congress



## 2004 - 2005 Platform

### Queens Civic Congress Membership as of June 2004

◆ Assoc. of Old Forest Hills ◆ Bayside Hills Civic Assoc. ◆ Bayswater Civic Assoc. ◆ Bay Terrace Community Alliance ◆ Bellaire/Bell vill Civic Assoc. ◆ Belle Harbor Property Owners ◆ Bellerose Commonwealth Civic Assoc. ◆ Bellerose-Hillside Civic Assoc. ◆ Bell Park Manor-Terrace Community Council ◆ Bowne Park Civic Assoc. ◆ Briarwood Community Assoc. ◆ Cambria Heights Civic Assoc. ◆ College Point Civic Taxpayers Assoc. ◆ COMET ◆ Concerned Citizens of Laurelton ◆ Creedmoor Civic Assoc. ◆ Doug-Bay Manor Civic Assoc. ◆ Douglaston Civic Assoc. ◆ Douglas Manor Assoc ◆ East Flushing Civic Assoc. ◆ **Federated Blocks of Laurelton** ◆ Floral Park Community Council ◆ Flushing on the Hill Civic Assoc. ◆ Flushing Heights Civic Assoc. ◆ Flushing Suburban Civic Assoc. ◆ Forest Hills Chamber of Commerce ◆ Forest Hills Crescents Assoc. ◆ Forest Hills-Van Court Assoc. ◆ Fresh Meadows Homeowners Assoc. ◆ Georgetown Mews ◆ Glen Oaks Village Owners ◆ **Greater Astoria Historical Society** ◆ **Greater Whitestone Taxpayers Civic Assoc.** ◆ Harding Heights Civic Assoc. ◆ Hillcrest Estates Civic Assoc. ◆ Hilltop Village Co-op #4 ◆ Hollis Hills Civic Assoc. ◆ Holliswood Civic Assoc. ◆ Hollis Park Gardens Assoc. ◆ Holly Civic Assoc. ◆ Hunters Point Community Coalition ◆ Hyde Park Gardens Cooperative ◆ Jackson Heights Beautification Group ◆ Jamaica Estates Assoc. ◆ Jamaica Hill Community Assoc. ◆ Juniper Park Civic Assoc. ◆ Kew Forest Neighborhood Assoc. ◆ Kew Gardens Civic Assoc. ◆ Kew Gardens Hills Civic Assoc. ◆ Kissena Park Civic Assoc. ◆ Little Neck Bay Civic Assoc. ◆ Little Neck Community Assoc. ◆ Little Neck Pines Assoc. ◆ Lost Community Civic Assoc. ◆ Malba Civic Assoc. ◆ Middle Village Property Owners ◆ Mitchell-Linden Civic Assoc. ◆ Newtown Civic Assoc. ◆ North Bellerose Civic Assoc. ◆ North Flushing Civic Assoc. ◆ North Hills Estates Civic Assoc. ◆ North Queens Homeowners Civic Assoc. ◆ Norwood Neighborhood Assoc. ◆ Oakland Terrace/Gardens Council ◆ Off Broadway Homeowners ◆ Our Neighborhood Improvement Assoc. ◆ Ozone Tudor Civic Assoc. ◆ Queensboro Hill Neighborhood Assoc. ◆ Queens Colony Civic Assoc. ◆ Queens Community Civic Corp. ◆ Queens Village Civic Assoc. ◆ Ramblersville-Hawtree Civic Assoc. ◆ Richmond Hill Historic Assoc. ◆ Ridgewood Property Owners Assoc. ◆ Rocky Hill Civic Assoc. ◆ Rosedale Civic Assoc. ◆ Royal Ranch Assoc. ◆ Sagamore Douglaston Civic Assoc. ◆ Southeast Queens Coalition of Concerned Neighbors ◆ Southeast Queens Federation of Civic Associations ◆ South Ozone Park Coalition of Block Associations ◆ South Ozone Park West Civic Assoc. ◆ Springfield/Rosedale Community Assoc. ◆ Sunnyside Gardens Harrison Place ◆ Surrey Estates Civic Assoc. ◆ The Federation of Civic Associations of Southeast Queens ◆ The Property Civic Assoc. ◆ Union Turnpike Merchants Assoc. ◆ United Forties Civic Assoc. ◆ United Neighbors Civic Assoc. of Jamaica ◆ Utopia Estates Civic Assoc. ◆ Utopia Improvement Assoc. ◆ Village Mall at Hillcrest ◆ Waldheim Neighborhood Assoc. ◆ Wayanda Civic Assoc. ◆ West Cunningham Park Civic Assoc. ◆ Westmoreland Assoc. ◆ Woodside Community Council ◆

# Queens Civic Congress



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Platform Chair: Richard C. Hellenbrecht

# Queens Civic Congress 2004 - 2005 Platform

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## President's Introductory Remarks

June 2004

My fellow citizens:

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The purpose of the biennial Queens Civic Congress Platform is to encourage our legislators in City Hall as well as in Albany to enact legislation to maintain the quality of life and preserve our neighborhoods. We are pleased to note that in the past few months several of our initiatives were the stimulus of Introductions to the City Council, which we hope will become law in the near future. For example, in the land use and buildings categories councilmembers have submitted legislation on oversight of the Board of Standards and Appeals, control of deed restrictions, reinspection of buildings violations and various concerns we've cited concerning buildings permit issuance.

Very truly yours,



SEAN M. WALSH  
President

## Officers of the Queens Civic Congress

Officers	Committees      Chairs
<p>Founders:     <i>Albert Greenblatt</i>                   <i>Robert I. Harris</i></p> <p>President:     <i>Sean M. Walsh</i></p> <p>Executive Vice Presidents:                   <i>Corey B. Bearak</i>                   <i>Patricia Dolan</i></p> <p>Vice Presidents:                   <i>Tyler Cassell</i>                   <i>Tina Chan</i>                   <i>Kenneth Cohen</i>                   <i>Richard Hellenbrecht</i>                   <i>Paul Kerzner</i>                   <i>David Kulick</i>                   <i>Audrey Lucas</i>                   <i>Nagassar Ramgarib</i>                   <i>Edwin Westley</i></p> <p>Secretary:    <i>Seymour Schwartz</i> Treasurer:    <i>James A. Trent</i></p>	<p>Audit &amp; By Laws....<i>Phil Ragusa, CPA</i> By Laws.....<i>Albert Greenblatt</i> Aviation &amp; Noise....<i>Seymour Schwarz</i> Building Access .....<i>Paul Kerzner</i>     Legislation Building Code.....<i>Nagassar Ramgarib</i>     Enforcement City Charter &amp; .....<i>James Walsh</i>     City Governance City Infrastructure &amp;..<i>Edwin Wesley</i>     Capital Program Community Facilities..<i>Tyler Cassell</i> Congress Platform ..<i>Richard Hellenbrecht</i> Co-ops &amp; Condos ...<i>Marc Haken</i> Creedmoor .....<i>Bernard Aquilino</i>     Task Force Deed &amp; Covenant ...<i>Tina Chan</i>     Restrictions Economic .....<i>Chris Collett</i>     Development Health/Hospitals &amp; ..<i>Kim Francis</i>     Social Services Higher Education ....<i>Kevin Forrestal</i> Housing Development..<i>Tom Paino</i> Newsletter &amp; PR.....<i>David Kulick</i> Nominations.....<i>Helene Zaro</i> Olympics 2012.....<i>David Kulick</i> Parks &amp; Cultural .....<i>Audrey Lucas</i>     Affairs Public and .....<i>Corey Bearak</i>     Legislative Affairs Public Education.....<i>Kenneth Cohen</i> Public Safety.....<i>Mary Anderson</i> Preservation and.....<i>Paul Graziano</i>     Landmarking Tenants.....<i>Florence Fisher</i> Transportation .....<i>James Trent</i> Workshops .....<i>Robert Harris</i> Zoning &amp; Planning ..<i>Pat Dolan</i></p>

## LAND USE AND ZONING

Queens and New York City require a land use policy based on community input and review, and reflecting the availability of city services and infrastructure. Such a policy is essential to preserve and enhance the fundamental character of the city's neighborhoods. Planning must be sufficiently flexible to respond to demographic and environmental dynamics by creating new opportunities for the orderly development of housing, business, and community facilities. Zoning maps and text must keep pace with new building, construction and signage technologies. Queens, with only five historic districts and few designated landmark buildings, faces the rapid loss of its architectural legacy. Recognizing the inherently commercial nature of concessions, large-scale concessions in parks and other public spaces must be strictly limited by rules for Major Concessions as mandated by the City Charter. The Landmarks Commission must focus its attention on Queens to preserve our unique and important architectural heritage.

Therefore, the Queens Civic Congress adopts the following:

1. Provide for community input and review and legislative oversight of major residential, commercial, industrial and public developments, even where ULURP is not specifically applicable.
2. Create additional contextual districts to protect existing residential configurations, density and uses not reflected in existing zoning districts. For example, there is no zone which adequately describes and protects single-family row houses by setting the FAR, bulk, density, height yard and setback requirements the same as the R-4-1 district and would allow front or rear parking only.
3. Provide technical assistance to community based organizations for neighborhood-based planning.
4. Support long-term planning as a means of preserving and enhancing the physical character and stability of neighborhoods.
5. Establish urban design elements as part of the land use decision-making process.
6. Map large-scale retail uses only in districts appropriately zoned: and subject any siting of "big box" retail establishments to community input and review and legislative oversight.
7. Mandate community review of publicly funded (federal, state and city) agencies' major proposals, not already subjected to ULURP.
8. Fund borough-based offices to perform planning functions and zoning for the borough.
9. Include in all land use decisions a non-renewable effective date for the implementation of the permitted action.
10. Require any amended plan or proposal by public agencies to include an updated environmental impact statement.
11. Require legislative review and oversight of Board of Standards and Appeals decisions to grant variances (see Intro. #170).
12. Subject all construction projects funded by state entities to ULURP.
13. Retain the existing limits on the transfer of development rights as provided for in the Zoning Resolution, i.e. limiting the transfer of unused air right allowances from one site only to an adjacent or shared lot.
14. Require a Special Permit and review under ULURP for zoning lot mergers.
15. Increase planning staff of agencies that make land use policy determinations.

16. Provide community boards with at least ninety days' notice for all land use applications.
17. Remove In-Fill in all R Zones
18. Restrict side and rear yard fences to 6 feet high and front yard fences to 3½ feet with open view of yard.
19. Return C signage rules.
20. Eliminate all exemptions from FAR space calculation in R1 to R5 zones throughout the building.
21. Revise Major Concessions Rules (see Parks section).
22. Urge continued cooperation among public officials and agencies to implement the Queens Civic Congress Master Plan for the Creedmoor campus, in addition to the already approved siting and construction of three new public schools.
23. Create new zoning text amendments to meet unanticipated needs resulting from new building technologies and new products offered by the housing and construction industry.
24. Create new zoning text amendments to regulate signage, building masks and other new signage technologies that increasingly degrade the urban landscape. Foreign language signs should contain an English translation at least as large as the foreign language lettering.
25. Establish an enforceable awning and canopy law that will provide reasonable identification while reducing visual congestion. All signage should include address in English for emergency services.
26. Ban all Billboards.
27. Clarify and improve zoning text with regard to use groups.
28. Require Landmarks Commission to work with Queens civics in identifying and designating individual buildings, historic districts and scenic landmark districts.
29. Require the Landmarks Commission to provide a written response for declining an application for landmark designation by a neighborhood and establish an appeal process to decisions of the Landmarks Commission to City Council.
30. Enhance staffing, technical and legal support for the Landmarks Commission.
31. Establish a borough commission to identify likely individual sites and districts for landmarking.
32. Eliminate in-fill bonus in R4 and R5 districts.
33. Subject all City Planning Commission (ULURP) decisions to mandatory legislative review.
34. Require a rear yard of no less than 20 feet on all R1 through R3 corner lots and all lots currently exempt from the usual rear yard regulations.
35. Ban overpaving in residential areas. Deny paving over of front, side and rear yards and restrict decks or patios to no more than 10% of the open space. Any added construction should provide adequate drainage into the natural watertable, and prohibit paving over the patch of green between the sidewalk and the street. Existing open space and green space must be preserved.
36. Require the Department of City Planning to provide accurate zoning maps, when necessary misland maps, to community boards and to notify community boards of all R-1 through R-5 zoning districts within their areas. Require Department of City Planning to assist community boards in redesignating these areas to more appropriate contextual districts.
37. Ban front yard parking in all R1 through R5 zoning districts.
38. Require front yard alignment with houses on the block in all R1 through R4 districts and prohibit upper floor porches that extend beyond the first floor setback.
39. Modify Zoning Resolution to regulate fencing in R1 through R4 districts to prohibit any front yard fencing that does not provide a clear sight block or clear sight corner. No front yard fencing higher than 2 ½ feet high.
40. Call upon the U.S. Congress to repeal the provision on zoning of religious facilities that usurps the authority of local government.

41. Eliminate McMansions through the combination of reinforced FAR restrictions, new rules to preserve the as build fabric of communities, mandate alignment with pre-existing buildings, eliminate overhangs and cantilevering over driveways.
42. Address overdevelopment of Queens by a combination of restrictions to self-certification, full enforcement of existing building and zoning codes and establishment of a borough task force to study the possible long-term effects of major development projects.
43. Improve the opportunity for community input and review and provide accountability in the siting of state-licensed group homes, also known as community residences, by amending state law to require the state agency which licenses the proposed facility in a community to:
  - a) notify affected community members;
  - b) hold a public hearing in the community near the proposed facility;
  - c) provide a 60 day comment period following the public hearing;
  - d) provide residents the opportunity, presently afforded community boards under existing law, to propose alternate sites; and
  - e) mandate that the community be able to present arguments of over-saturation but, unlike existing law, consider the existence of all types of community facilities which may impact a neighborhood.
44. Establish height limits for all R1 and R2 districts of 32 feet.

# ILLEGAL BUILDING & ILLEGAL CONVERSION

The illegal building conversion, or adding of apartments in existing housing in excess of the established zoning and use group regulations, persists as a major quality of life problem in Queens, and more importantly the deaths and injuries that result from fires and building collapses make clear the need to assure the public safety of those who reside in or visit homes that we expect to be safe. Throughout Queens illegal conversions continue unabated as the City reduced staffing levels at the Department of Buildings (DOB) and Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) in response to financial difficulties in the late '70's and early '90's.

Therefore, the Queens Civic Congress adopts the following:

1. Seek prompt and decisive action by the City against illegal apartments, single room occupancies and inappropriate commercial uses in residential buildings.
2. Increase inspection and enforcement by the city DOB and HPD to achieve compliance.
3. Re-inspect all violations within 30 days and until there is compliance (see Intro. #203).
4. Maintain in an "open" status all Building and Housing complaints until physical site inspection is conducted and the violation is cleared (see Intro. #232).
5. Mandate the Buildings Department to require applicants to cure all outstanding violations before approval of any new-building permit or alteration permit (see Intro. #232).
6. Enforce enacted state legislation to increase inspectors' access to buildings with suspected violations (S. 6084) and to allow the filing of tax liens (S. 3597A) on unpaid Environmental Control Board (ECB) fines -- i.e. to allow ECB to assess fines and other liens that can be converted to tax liens and potentially result in seizure of property.
7. Enact legislation to authorize building inspector access to investigate illegal building violations in a dwelling (see Intro. #230) and legislate the Kerzner proposal to Improve inspector access.
8. Mandate DOB and HPD to allow community participation in inspections.
9. Require that DOB dedicate at least one full-time inspector to each community board as a regular point of contact on buildings issues, inspections and follow-ups, with no less than two full days per month in the assigned district or as necessary to meet residents' complaints.
10. Establish a multi-agency task force to coordinate services among the fire, buildings department and other agencies, to report directly to the office of the mayor.
11. Establish a program to educate and inform new and established homeowners of relevant building codes and zoning laws and fines for noncompliance. Use the Offices of Council Members and the Borough Presidents as resources for outreach.
12. Require the Police Department to assist and cooperate with the Buildings Department to enforce stop work orders (see Intro. #245).
13. Prohibit self-certification for new building or alteration permits and the correction of violations.
14. Pending elimination of self certification, mandate the random audit of 20 percent of self certified applications within 20 days of filing. Immediately report all proven violations to the State Board of Education and remove privileges for self-certification and Directive 14 inspections.
15. Reestablish quarterly building inspections of all multiple dwellings by DOB and HPD.
16. Require registration of restrictive deed covenants with the DOB. Require title searches to identify and report restrictive covenants to the purchaser and financial institution (see Intro. #67).

17. Empower the Department of Buildings to enforce deed restrictions limiting use, density, yards and architectural elements (see Intro. #15).
18. Restrict the size of “For Sale” signs in R1 through R6 from a maximum of 12 square feet to 4 square feet.
19. Ban “Sold” signs or display of “For Sale” signs on residential property after contract of sale is signed.
20. Dedicate all DOB and HPD revenue from fees for inspections, applications and permits, and fines to a special fund for code and safety enforcement. Require the Commissioner of Buildings to provide an accounting of revenue the agency collects and its expenditures every six months. If the amount of the expenditures is less than 90% of agency revenues, the commissioner shall either reduce fees or raise expenditures to match expenditures
21. Continue to require utility companies to obtain verification of Building Department approved permits prior to installation of additional gas or electric meters or increased amperage service.
22. Support legislative initiatives (S. 6102) to require real estate brokers to verify local zoning compliance on any property listed for sale or lease and encourage recent mortgage broker/banker initiatives requiring buyer/seller certification of zoning compliance prior to loan approvals.
23. Support the efforts of the State Attorney General to restore the non-solicitation law, which was found to be invalid by a lower court in the state.

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES

“As-of-right” may not be right for the community. The New York City Zoning Resolution defines many religious, medical and professional operations as "community facilities" and permits their siting in any zoning district as-of-right. Substantial changes in uses of community facility since 1961 adversely affect many neighborhoods. Religious facilities, for example, increasingly hold events and turn to commercial uses to try to cover increasing operating costs, bringing extra traffic, noise, parking and congestion into otherwise quiet neighborhoods. Houses of worship occupy private homes in residential areas, often violating required rear yards and without adequate parking, necessary handicapped access and emergency egress. "Professional offices" originally included under this category aimed to provide communities with medical doctors, dentists or lawyers who lived there and dedicated a small walk-in office to provide services to local clients. More recently, residential neighborhoods experience the conversion of private houses to use by multiple professionals with substantial clinical practices.

Publicly and privately supported community facilities pose potential disruptions to our neighborhoods. Communities must be able to comment, evaluate and review the siting and operations of these entities.

Therefore, the Queens Civic Congress adopts the following:

1. Subject the siting, scoping and sponsoring of publicly funded facilities to ULURP regulations as a non-conforming use.
2. Eliminate “as of right” bulk bonus without a special permit with community review.
3. Base the siting of facilities on the need for the proposed service within the community based on the number of like facilities within the area.
4. Require the sponsoring federal, state or city agency to notify all elected officials, community boards and community-based civic organizations and neighborhood groups coincidentally with the promulgation of the Request for Proposal. Mandate that public notice must appear at the same time in community newspapers that circulate in the affected neighborhood(s).
5. Require, coinciding with the issuance of the initial Request for Proposal, full disclosure by the sponsoring federal, state or city agency and by any provider responding to the RFP:
  - a. verification of need in a sited neighborhood.
  - b. alternative sites.
  - c. choice of providers.
  - d. terms of the contract (including length).
  - e. establishment of a Community Compliance Review Board.
  - f. full financial disclosure by the provider.
  - g. environmental impact statement.
6. Rate objectively the effectiveness and impact on the community of any proposed program.
7. Create repository for public comment on facilities at NYC Department of Consumer Affairs.
8. Eliminate the community facilities bulk bonus in residential districts. Count recreation rooms, basement, cellar and attics in the FAR.
9. Prohibit rear or side yard parking at community facilities in residential areas
10. Require community facilities to obtain special permits when they seek to site in residential districts -- subject to public review with legislative oversight. BSA decisions should have an appeals process to City Council for disputed cases.

11. Impose parking requirements for all community facilities regardless of the zone, predicated on occupancy of the entire building rather than the number of fixed seats.
12. Apply the Internal Revenue Code with respect to accessory uses on community facilities.
13. Require Department of Buildings review of any change in use of a community facility to determine continued eligibility for community facility bonuses or exemptions.
14. Require on-site parking for all community facility accessory vehicles.
15. Parking spots should meet standard City requirements and valet parking should not be allowed for safety sake.
16. Require a special use permit granting process when the community facilities changes or alter use under which they are built "as of right" or sought a variance. A new use requires a new permit and use vote.
17. Only permit "as of right" without any parking requirement for houses of worship with no ancillary uses and no bulk bonuses that occupy or build consistent with the residential zoning in R1, R2, R3 and R4 zones.
18. Require parking space for one in every six persons in total occupancy if any increase in bonus if there is not a concurrent increase in side yard buffer without parking.

## PUBLIC SAFETY

We have witnessed a significant reduction in crime across the City. Four factors remain of great concern to the Congress: police staffing is currently lower in Queens precincts than during the Dinkins administration; lack of community policing; inadequate response time to 911 emergency calls; and deteriorating public confidence in the NYPD, particularly among our diverse ethnic communities.

The response time of the Fire Department's Emergency Medical Service has not improved.

Therefore, the Queens Civic Congress adopts the following:

1. Bring Queens precinct staffing to Safe Street/Safe Cities levels and maintain those levels.
2. Increase the percentage of uniformed police in Queens to match the citywide percentage of crimes. We have 19% of the manpower, but 25% of the crime in the city.
3. Restore and increase police staff assigned to precinct-based Community Patrol.
4. Bring all Queens precincts to less than seven minute response time.
5. Increase NYPD Budget allocation to purchase more RMPs (radio motor patrol vehicles), Unmarked and Nondescript Vehicles. Keep the present practice of keeping cars for three years, i.e. 90,000 miles.
6. Increase allocation of RMPs to outlying precincts.
7. Increase emphasis on auto theft, robberies and burglaries, apprehension and prevention.
8. Work with community groups for a graffiti-free environment, increase penalties for defacing property and pass a law to require property owners to allow the city or city-authorized groups to cleanup defaced private property (draft proposal available).
9. Continue the police bicycle surveillance program with tax payer supported equipment and maintenance.
10. Require NYPD to enforce Department of Buildings and Housing Preservation and Development stop work orders and assist with the service of violations and inspections.
11. Strengthen the Civilian Complaint Review Board and re-engineer it as an independent NYPD monitor with its budget set as a percent of the NYPD budget.
12. Maintain existing Emergency Medical Service ambulance tours and encourage as many additional voluntary ambulance tours to enhance emergency response.
13. Enforce training and performance standards for voluntary ambulance groups used by the Fire Department.
14. Require contracted ambulance service to utilize the nearest medical facilities.
15. Develop and implement a true community policing program to engage the resources of concerned communities in a partnership with the NYPD to address crime and disorder, including quality of life problems, in each precinct.
16. Implement a plan to reduce gun violence, also supported by the Million Mom March Queens Chapter: Deploy cops appropriately to take guns off the street and prevent illegal guns from finding their way here, without violating one's rights or worse; Advocate the strengthened "Christopher's Law" requirement for handgun safety locks on all firearms at the federal level; Require reporting -- in the Mayor's Management Report -- on gun safety and enforcement measures; National photo licensing and safety testing for handgun buyers; National registration of all handguns; More gun case prosecutions by the U.S Attorneys under tougher Federal statutes; Prosecute gun cases under federal law by empowering Assistant District

Attorneys, by special designation as federal prosecutors by U.S. Attorneys; and Initiate and pursue lawsuits against gunmakers.

17. Enact a ban on racial profiling by law enforcement agencies (Intro 142).
18. Return the Fire Marshall station to each borough and the Queens Marshall to Fort Totten during each shift.

## PARKS AND RECREATION

Parks and recreational facilities are among the most important quality of life programs of any community, particularly in Queens County. Parks are irreplaceable assets. The long-term viability of parks in Queens has become increasingly under attack due to significant reductions in professional maintenance and upkeep at Parks facilities and on trees along our thoroughfares throughout the borough. Deferred maintenance and use of non-professional maintenance workers will eventually lead to a complete breakdown of Parks services. The City fails to adequately fund the Department to deliver horticulture and Forestry Services and to staff sufficient plumbers, masons, carpenters, etc. The City needs to allocate all parks-based revenues to the Department of Parks and Recreation operation budget. According to NY4P Parks have seen a budget reduction since 1990 of 32% and a 70% reduction in staff, seriously affecting Parks maintenance.

The Parks Department has conducted major capital programs to improve parks and has not followed-through with maintenance and support services to protect the investment. In addition, as the borough with the largest amount of natural area, Queens has the most to lose from a policy of only maintaining the ball fields and playgrounds at its parks. Given the extensive residential and commercial development of Queens, it is crucial that we protect in every way possible the current and potential parklands throughout the borough.

Queens contains many lovely parks and greenways that must be protected from natural deterioration, vandalism and changes in use of open areas due to a variety of factors. Our Parks are particularly vulnerable properties, which repeatedly attract proposals that may harm these precious resources.

Therefore, the Queens Civic Congress adopts the following:

1. Authorize the Department of Parks and Recreation to retain funding generated by Park properties.
2. Establish a secure funding source for Greenways for the Queens area.
3. Upgrade bikepaths and include in Greenways.
4. Create a CompStat for parks that will provide the public with regular, accessible measurements of maintenance and operation of all 1,700 Parks Department properties.
5. Enforce vendors' permit requirements in parks to control illegal vendors.
6. Maintain graffiti-free parks and playgrounds.
7. Remove and replace dead trees within 6 months, prune trees on a five-year cycle and plant at least 25,000 trees citywide per year.
8. Fund the Forestry Division so that it can oversee the city's urban forest.
9. Improve parks' physical plant
  - a) Increase maintenance, security and repair services at Parks;
  - b) Improve plant life, nature trails;
  - c) Add recreational/educational programs and services.
  - d) Reconnect bodies of water to native water supply to revitalize local species and reduce algae.

10. Strictly limit Major Concessions in Parks – Repeal the 1998 Rules for Major Concessions and create new ones that establish realistic triggers for public review, such as:
  - a) Marinas;
  - b) Parking lots of any size;
  - c) New buildings of more than 10,000 square feet -- not in parks;
  - d) New buildings of more than 5,000 square feet -- in parks;
  - e) Open use in park -- 5,000 square feet;
  - f) Restaurant -- 150 seats or more;
  - g) One or more concession totaling 25% of one park.
11. Hire sufficient professional employees to maintain the NYC Parks infrastructure.
12. Establish a Parks budget line item for the maintenance for natural open spaces.
13. Support the Flushing Meadows-Corona Park Conservancy.
14. Protect Flushing Meadows-Corona Park from any further commercial and corporate exploitation.
15. Impose a moratorium on all new construction/development of non-public-benefit projects in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park pending completion of a Master Plan by a Commission that has public members.
16. Oppose constructing a rowing regatta and a white water rafting center in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park for Olympic events.
17. Subject use of city parks for 2012 Olympic events to ULURP.
18. Establish “Flagship” designation for the Alley Pond Regional Watershed Park and seek community input.
19. Designate additional major parks in Queens as flagship parks, joining the only Queens flagship parks: Forest Park and Flushing Meadows-Corona Park.
20. Preserve Fort Totten - This beautiful and historic area has become available due to reduced need as a military installation by the federal government. We must protect this property for use of future Queens residents by:
  - a) Mandating restrictive covenant for the reversion of any Fort Totten space exclusively to Parks Department for public use if the space is no longer required by Fire Department for educational purposes.
  - b) Expanding space available for use by community not-for-profit organizations to 14 buildings.
21. Require specificity in the Fire Department’s agreement concerning maintenance of Fort Totten open areas by Parks. Fire and Parks Departments must have nontransferable line item budgets for this maintenance and upkeep.
22. Complete the acquisition of all private parcels within the boundaries of Udalls Cove Ravine by 2005.
23. Acquire remaining waterfall and wetland parcels in Northeast Queens and Jamaica Bay.
24. Acquire Klein Farm and additional parcels suitable for parkland.
25. Expedite acquisition of land for Idlewild Park.

## TRANSPORTATION - MASS TRANSIT

Queens is a borough of over 2 million residents, encompassing scores of communities. Queens' transportation infrastructure is the life-line that binds the neighborhoods of the communities of our borough together. It links Queens residents with jobs, services and activities both inside and outside the borough. Providing fast, accessible transportation for residents of the borough is critical to our economic, educational, cultural and social success. Our economy is highly dependent on efficient transportation. Should commuting become difficult, individuals and companies will seek housing and economic opportunities elsewhere.

Transportation in our borough includes both mass transit, primarily subways and buses and to a lesser extent, the Long Island Rail Road, and vehicular transportation, i.e. our local streets and roads and arterial highways, expressways, bridges and tunnels. Private bus companies, using City-owned facilities and buses, operate many local and express routes in Queens. Long Island Rail Road and Metro North commuter railroads receive significantly larger subsidies than the subway system at the expense of maintenance and expansion.

The train and bus service cuts sustained in the mid-1990's have somewhat been restored, but the growth in ridership has resulted in continued overcrowding, discomfort and inconvenience to riders. Proposals to close subway token booths would increase security risks to all riders and would impose a particular hardship on elderly, the disabled and parents with young children.

Planning and funding for capital projects to expand capacity is at best tenuous. Each of these transportation modes has separate needs.

### Therefore, the Queens Civic Congress adopts the following:

1. Provide Queens commuters a more clean, comfortable, dependable and speedy trip to and from work. Apply Metropolitan Transportation Authority budget to increase mass transit service.
2. Establish a citywide Surface Transit Authority to coordinate interborough operations, improve surface transportation, ensure a meaningful community role in project and operations planning and improve scheduling.
3. Call on MTA New York City Transit to revise its plans 63<sup>rd</sup> Street Tunnel Service Plan implemented on 12/16/2001, which generates numerous rider complaints from both the Brooklyn and Queens communities, to the Service Options jointly proposed by QCC, Noble Street Block Association & Friends and Regional Plan Association to restore the pre-existing E, F (operating through the 53<sup>rd</sup> Street tunnel), G (to Forest Hills) & R service routes and run the V trains instead through the 63<sup>rd</sup> Street Tunnel as a Broadway express until the opening of the Second Avenue line, when the V trains will eventually enter the Second Avenue Subway upon its completion.
4. Call on The Long Island Rail Road to increase marketing of its service to Queens residents, review prospects for re-use of abandoned and underused service lines in Queens and must complete a marketing study before recommending or implementing any further station closings in Queens.
5. Call on the MTA New York City Transit to abandon its proposal of a three-year plan to

- eliminate all token booths and clerks with MetroCard machines and turnstiles from the New York City subway system, and its further proposal to begin this process by closing 53 booths.
6. Call on MTA New York City Transit to honor judge Lebedeff's decision, which stated that these alterations constitute a significant change in access to subway service, for which the NYCTA is required" (i) to give public, including notice to affected community boards, (ii) to conduct a public hearing, and (iii) to obtain the approval of its board, all as specified in Section 1205(5) of the Public Authorities Law."
  7. Call on MTA New York City Transit to provide convenient, street level MetroCard outlets for seniors and people with disabilities since MetroCard service is currently provided only at subway station booths reached by staircases or at off-street retail locations, barring access by the physically disabled and seniors.
  8. Enforce the three-minute rule for idling buses.
  9. Require transportation agencies to give at least 90 days notice to community boards, community organizations and affected institutions before implementing changes, modifications or removal of bus routes, bus stops and service delivery.
  10. Call on MTA New York City Transit and the N.Y.C. Department of Transportation to reconfigure Queens bus routes, many of which were laid out more than a half century ago, to reflect changing residential, commercial, business, cultural and industrial needs. Require public review of proposed route changes.
  11. Establish fiscal equity for subway riders relative to suburban commuter lines to correct the billion dollar inequity in fare subsidies applied to out-of-towners.
  12. Study the feasibility of MTA New York City Transit takeover of private bus routes.
  13. Require the MTA New York City Transit and all public and private surface operators to purchase exclusively buses that use non-polluting fuels, commensurate with standards applicable to Nassau and Suffolk counties.
  14. Create new and revise, where applicable, existing bus routes to provide one-seat cross-borough surface transit.
  15. Authorize Access A Ride to Cross county lines up to five miles (Weprin bill A-9515).
  16. Support the takeover of Queens private bus lines by the MTA with full investment of equipment to integrate the lines with Queens MTA lines on condition that the MTA retains existing local bus routes and express service, retain existing fare structure, assume existing employee pension liability and assume title to, operation and maintenance of current private bus garages.
  17. Make construction of the 7 line extension to the far West Side of Manhattan a priority. Oppose the 2nd Avenue line unless it is a full 4 track line with connections to the Bronx and Brooklyn and Queens subway lines.

## TRANSPORTATION - VEHICULAR TRANSPORTATION

It was pointed out in the last section that transportation in our borough includes both mass transit and vehicular transportation. Our local streets and roads and arterial highways, expressways, bridges and tunnels serve both passenger vehicles and trucks and, to a large extent, share these important roadways with bus loads of people headed to school and work, not to mention pedestrians and bicycles. The value of truck transportation to the borough's and the region's economy can not be underestimated. We must be cognizant also, of the need for peace, quiet and safety in residential areas. All of these needs must be balanced with a limited budget, lack of room for roadway expansion and an ever aging infrastructure.

Therefore, the Queens Civic Congress adopts the following:

1. Require New York State and New York City to control and reduce ever-expanding trucking and commercial vehicular traffic that is clogging our streets and highways producing insufferable pollution. Freight transportation alternatives must be developed, such as the proposed rail freight tunnel from Brooklyn under New York Harbor. We support the building of the rail freight tunnel under New York harbor provided that the transfer of rail freight to truck be distributed evenly throughout Long Island and that Western Queens not be the sole transfer point.
2. Control and reduce illegal and perilous truck and commercial vehicular traffic on Queens' local streets through meaningful policing and environmental enforcement.
3. Expand use of EZ-Pass for paying municipal parking lot fees and install EZ-Pass scanners in all lanes, including manned lanes at MTA Bridges and Tunnels facilities.
4. Enact legislation to protect the privacy of EZ-Pass users and bar the use of EZ-Pass for monitoring or enforcing speeding and other traffic infractions or for tracking vehicular use. Enact legislation to set standards for law enforcement agencies or others seeking EZ-Pass data that would require a judicial subpoena.
5. Implement variable congestion pricing tunnel and bridge tolls based on time of a day use, particularly featuring off-hour discounts for travelers and truckers in order to relieve prime travel time delays
6. Maintain free use of all non-TBTA East River and Harlem River bridges for all city residents.
7. Create safe cycling routes to encourage less reliance on fossil-fueled vehicles and to enhance the quality of life of Queens citizens.
8. Oppose the expansion of HOV lanes in Queens, which have proven to be ineffective in national surveys, as an imposition on the quality of life of residents and communities in its path, with no benefit to the people of Queens.
9. Require community board and civic association consultation and input on the City's determination of truck routes
10. Regulate and closely supervise city and utility work crews and private contractors who cut open streets and roads so that remedial work is proper, durable and long-lasting. Coordinate roadway improvements with utilities to prevent re-opening newly restored streets.
11. Oppose any increase in van services as a substitute for adequate public transportation.
12. Increase handicapped accessible taxicabs on City streets.

## TRANSPORTATION - AVIATION

We recognize the importance of Kennedy International and LaGuardia Airports to the convenience and economic vitality of the borough and city. However, we must control and curtail the negative impact of both noise and pollution stemming from the aircraft activity at the two Queens airports, and abort the harsh, often unbearable sufferings of residents nearby to these facilities.

Therefore, the Queens Civic Congress adopts the following:

1. Oppose the weakening or termination of the High Density Rule, as well as additional exemptions as permitted in the Aviation Investment and Reform Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (AIR 21) enacted in April 2000.
2. Call for a rollback of any additional flights (slots) at LaGuardia Airport to below the levels preceding the enactment of AIR 21.
3. Call for the re-allocation of existing slots, not new slots, for greater efficiencies and to meet current needs, and to set statutory limitations on the number of operations at New York metropolitan airports.
4. Call for the restriction of all flights, scheduled and unscheduled (except emergency operations) to the hours of 7 am to 11 pm.
5. Improve noise abatement procedures, including an immediate ban on flights by any Stage2 commercial jetliners equipped with “hush kits,” which have no effect on noise or pollution reduction.
6. Call for a change in take-off frequency below 58 seconds to a much wider time interval to attenuate the unremitting jet-noise created by the “high density rule.
7. Establish and enforce formal accountability by the Port Authority and the Federal Aviation Administration to the Environmental Protection Administration and independent citizen representation. Reinstate and strengthen enforcement of the Quiet Communities Act of 1978 and the Noise Control Act of 1972.
8. Reduce immediately the effects on human mental and physical health and to the environment of aircraft noise and pollution from jet exhaust and the dumping of jet fuel.
9. Support legislation which would call for an airport measure-cap-trade program as is currently in effect at Boston’s Logan Airport, where if the airport exceeds its pollution levels, it has to pay or trade with low-pollution areas.
10. Call for the installation of air-sensing devices on the Queens side of runway 13/31 at LaGuardia Airport to supplement those being installed in a controlled test by the State of New York’s Health Department in the South Bronx.
11. Adjust flight schedules to more evenly spread aircraft noise among the communities. Adjust the distribution of flights off LaGuardia's runway 13, since northeast Queens endures 95 percent of the take-offs at LaGuardia.
12. Require aircraft landing and taking off at Kennedy or LaGuardia Airports to use flight paths over water, parks or highways when practical.
13. Subject any disposition of an airport by sale, lease, transfer or license agreement to approval by the City Council.
14. Subject any management contract covering an airport to approval by the City Council.
15. Call for the Queens Borough President’s Advisory Board to become more proactive in terms of sustainable aviation policies, programs and projects in behalf of the affected communities.
16. The Flushing Airport exemption must not be removed.

## TRANSPORTATION - JFK AND LaGUARDIA ACCESS

We agree to the need for an alternative efficient mode of access to and from Kennedy International and LaGuardia Airports and Manhattan. However, the “AirTrain” Light Rail Airport Access System fails to provide a one-seat ride from the airport to Manhattan and does not meet the needs of airline travelers for efficiency, comfort and affordability, nor to reduce the amount of vehicular traffic congestion and air pollution to any significant degree. Nor does the Port Authority’s own pre-construction evaluation of ridership, and even lower subsequent operational reports in relation to costs justify this costly spur to the Jamaica Long Island Rail Road station.

The project alignment has rendered significant harm to the many communities in its path and has created an ugly blight on Queens neighborhoods and will bring harm for many decades to come. As importantly, its design and construction features are not compatible with existing or future rail systems and technology, thereby rendering it wasteful and unnecessarily costly for any eventual incorporation into a one-seat ride system.

Therefore, the Queens Civic Congress adopts the following:

1. Provide direct one-seat rail access must be provided to both Kennedy International and LaGuardia Airports that will be seamless, accessible, comfortable and affordable with greater efficiencies. Our responsible borough, city and state officials must see to it that the projects go forward in a careful, responsible manner that minimizes harm to communities. Cut and cover, sound barriers and all available technologies should be employed to preserve and enhance the neighborhoods that are home to tens of thousands of Queens residents.
2. Subject such projects to community input and review.
3. Call for a direct route to LaGuardia Airport via the Port Washington line of the Long Island Rail Road, with a connection at Willets Point, which will have a minimal impact on communities.

# EDUCATION

The landscape has changed a great deal since our State Legislature gave control of our schools to the Mayor. Many changes are afoot affecting every facet of educating our children. It will take between three to five years for us to judge the impact of these changes, but we must be flexible to make adjustments during the journey.

School funding continues as the primary concern of the Queens Civic Congress. New York City schools serve 38% of the New York State school population and receive 36% of the budget. The Governor and our Legislative leaders must develop a financing plan that provides a sound basic education for each student from early childhood through high school. In addition, the 2000 census demonstrated a 14% increase in Queens County, which must be taken into account in developing the state budget. The teachers' union and the Department of Education are not fully aligned as a team to work for the benefit of our students. This must change.

Overall education funding needs to rise to a level that ensures our children receive the best education possible. Take care to ensure that no cuts in education reach schools and classrooms. All analyses of educational outcomes show better results with smaller classes and when programs in music, sports, and the arts are added. Monies anticipated as a result of the favorable verdict in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit must supplement, not replace, any current funding. Limited funds to build schools make it imperative to work to site them where needed.

Over the last year, progress was made in building new schools and making additions to existing schools for Queens, including: completed construction of five primary, one intermediate and two high schools and three intermediate school additions. This provided 8,712 seats. In addition, 1,087 high school seats were provided through lease construction program.

The QCC finds after school programs vitally important because 26% of our students come from single-parent households, and 40 % from households where both parents work outside the home. The most recent statistics demonstrate our students get into trouble between the hours of 3:00 – 8:00 p.m.

The QCC supports education as a top priority. Education in our borough offers an example of what can be done when teachers, parents, administrators, community leaders, and children work together.

## **Accomplished from our 2002-3 Platform:**

1. Abolish the Central Board of Education
2. Abolish the Local Community School Boards
3. School Funding - The allocation of funds to the boroughs and schools shall be per capita, according to the program and the number of eligible students. The Mayor and the City Council shall allocate funds to the programs based on units of appropriation set by the Chancellor
4. Increase Teacher Salaries
5. Support the implementation of school-based management - each school should have assembled a school leadership team composed of parents, teachers, administrators, school staff and students. Their two core responsibilities are the creation of the school's Comprehensive Education Plan (CE) and the Development of a School-Based Budget

and Staffing Plan.

6. End social promotion at every grade level. Beginning in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade is a start but each school must get the resources sufficient to enable children to achieve their potential and not be left behind. See also sections 1, 2, 4, 8 and 9, below.

Therefore, the Queens Civic Congress adopts the following:

1. Implement a fair New York State financing plan. The Governor and our Legislative leaders have been ordered by the State's highest court to increase funding to NYC schools which provide a sound basic education through high school. Various stakeholders have provided estimates from \$5 to \$7 billion of additional funding to answer the court order. The governor's own committee is in this ballpark. Get to work.
2. Reduce school overcrowding by building new schools. The following information was provided by the New York City School Construction Authority: Over the last year, progress was made in building new schools and making additions to existing schools for Queens, including: completed construction of five primary, one intermediate and two high schools and three intermediate school additions. This provided 12,397 seats. In addition, 1,087 high school seats were provided through lease construction program. Completion of three primary schools is planned in CY-2004 that provides 1,942 seats. (See appendix 1 for the specific schools.)
3. Implement a robust pre-Kindergarten program. All the studies indicate our children are better students and better citizens the earlier they begin the education process. Any parent of a four year old will tell you how their children absorbed all of their experiences. Early Childhood Centers are a no-brainer and we must carry out the State mandate to implement.
4. Fund classroom and school-based services before administrative costs.
5. Reform School Governance
  - a. Establish Borough School Superintendents - Each shall be responsible for all pre-K, elementary, middle/junior high and high schools (including specialized and alternative schools), citywide special education programs, and adult and continuing education. This will facilitate programs that meet the basic needs of boroughs and their neighborhoods. The Chancellor shall establish the criteria for borough financial officers. Each borough superintendent, subject to the Chancellor's approval, shall appoint borough financial officers. Each borough Superintendent shall select all supervisors from district managers to principals, educational administrators, supervisors of special education and assistant principals. This model also saves monies by eliminating the ten regional superintendents and their staffs
  - b. Eliminate the Panel for Educational Policy.
  - c. School Funding - The allocation of funds to the boroughs and schools shall be per capita, according to the program and the number of eligible students. The Mayor and the City Council shall allocate funds to the programs based on units of appropriation set by the Chancellor.
6. Implement the building-by-building maintenance plan.
7. Expand the Beacon Program to include all schools, thereby encouraging youth programs in each neighborhood; provide oversight to ensure the program delivers

- services identified and needed by the community. The city must ultimately plan to open more neighborhood schools at night and on weekends for youth programs. Queens needs this because Beacons tend to be separated by great distances.
- 8.** Expand Computer usage and training, provide well-trained computer instructors.
  - 9.** Reduce class sizes to levels appropriate in each grade and student grouping and restore all arts, music, sports and extracurricular programs.
  - 10.** Encourage the development of vocational apprenticeship, based on a model that will teach those students with an aptitude and preference for skilled crafts.
  11. Enforce immunization requirements.
  12. Perform janitorial services in schools by City employees, not contractors.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Queens has the second largest and best-educated labor force of all the boroughs. Queens also has a significant pool of available warehouse, industrial and commercial space - much of which has been modernized and upgraded. But the competition for office, retail and professional space and jobs from Nassau County and other regional counties is fierce.

The lifeblood of any county is the ability to attract new businesses and to retain existing businesses in order to create economic growth and provide job opportunities for the local residents. Queens has major aviation industry jobs, service sector, wholesale and retail trade industries in its economic base. Large tracts of vacant land or buildings in previously industrial areas and in the Rockaways create huge opportunities for significant economic development in our borough. Because of the impact of large scale retail development, Economic Impact Review should be part of the review process.

Entrepreneurs and businesses need certain incentives, in addition to access to capital and labor, in order to start a new venture or continue an existing business.

Therefore, the Queens Civic Congress adopts the following:

1. Institute the "Downtown Manhattan Tax Credit Model" to help neighborhood commercial shopping strips - The shopping areas in the other boroughs should be able to use this concept of tax credit incentives. The tax credit model was successfully used in the revitalization of downtown Manhattan to improve commercial and residential neighborhood occupancy, and to increase utilization and enhance competitiveness with respect to neighboring megastores and suburban malls.
2. Expand the sales tax exemption on apparel/footwear purchases to \$500, and include in the exemption most essential household items.
3. Eliminate the Unincorporated Business Tax - Entrepreneurs and professionals continue to leave the city, particularly Queens County, for the lure of a less taxing business tax climate of nearby suburban counties.
4. Complete the across-the-board rollback of all the Dec. 2002 real estate tax increases for private homes, rental, condominium and cooperative residential property as well as commercial, retail and residential property.
5. Stabilize Water/Sewer Rates – Roll back water/sewer rates, which have been going up at percentage increase two and three times the rate of inflation. This “hidden tax” is a source of revenue for the city that receives little attention and no retribution from those who have to pay it. The independent New York City Water Board has to learn to live within its means.
  - a. Dedicate all funds generated by the Water Board to running the agency and for operating and maintaining the City's vital water supply and sewer systems.
  - b. Enact legislation to Delay Water Board Rate Setting until after City adopts its budget. In 2001, The Assembly unanimously passed legislation A.03791; it needs to pass it this year and the State Senate must introduce and pass this bill.
  - c. Cap the water/sewer rate increase yearly at the rate of inflation.
  - d. Remove capital costs from the calculation of the rate structure.

- e. Fund capital water and sewer projects directly from the general New York City capital budget.
  - f. Set up a senior citizen water rate relief program similar to the Seniors Homeowner Exemption on real estate taxes. Pending legislation [A.06495/S.111](#) (2004) must get passed.
6. Eliminate the New York State gross receipts tax on our utility bills - The gross receipts tax is a hidden tax imposed by New York State, and very few other states, on its residents' utility bills - gas, electric and telephone. The gross receipts tax contributes to New York State's being one of the highest energy cost states in the country, raising about \$1 billion for the state coffers. While the state has begun to phase this tax out, under the present scenario it will be years before it is eliminated. Furthermore, the deregulation of utilities will draw out-of-state competitors, which are exempt from this tax. These utilities will be able to offer lower rates than our native utilities. It is time to eliminate the residential and commercial gross receipts tax in this legislative session.
  7. Eliminate the New York City personal income tax surcharge - New York City is one of the only municipalities in the country that has a personal income tax, much less a surcharge on top of that. This onerous tax add-on was imposed temporarily during financial crisis in order to meet City obligations. We must immediately remove the personal income tax surcharge and lower the City's personal income tax to retain the middle-class tax base in the City.
  8. Index to COLA the income eligibility limits for the Senior Citizen Homeowners Exemption (SCHE) and the Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE). Pass the legislation, A. 06538 (2004) introduced in the Assembly and needed to be re-introduced in the Senate.
  9. Implement Co-op and Condo Property Tax reform without shifting any burden to owners of one, two or three family homes.  
Capture upwards of one billion dollars in lost real estate tax revenue based on illegal uses and improper property classifications through a combination of fines and improvements in the classification of real property.
  10. Reform the City's personal income tax through a surcharge on (New York State Adjusted Gross) incomes over \$200,000 (nearly 90% of this gets raised from those who earn over \$1,000,000) and apply the revenue to reduce the real estate tax rates hikes.
  11. Develop an affordable housing plan to create a mix of 150,000 units over ten years, including low (working poor), moderate and middle income and senior housing and preserve (existing) Mitchell-Lama and FHA 236 buildings by leveraging private and non-profit resources through a re-allocation of existing housing development funds.
  12. Remove the \$15 auto registration surcharge
  13. Repeal State and City surcharges on cellular and landline telephone bills for 911 and enhanced 911. Oppose any institution of the 911 surcharge for future enhancements.

## CULTURE

Queens has over two million people, but no established cultural center. Several major cultural activities have proven the viability and need for cultural development in Queens, particularly the temporary relocation of MOMA to Queens, redevelopment of Silvercup Studios, cultural institutions in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park and Flushing Town Hall.

Therefore, the Queens Civic Congress adopts the following:

1. Establish an Arts District in Long Island City in close proximity to public transportation, parking and regional highways
2. Qualify more Queens-based cultural programs for CIG status.
3. Adopt a fair and consistent formula for the distribution of funds to cultural institutions throughout the City, such as use of size of physical plant, payroll, attendance, quality of programs, etc.
4. If there is a commitment to the Olympic Village, guarantee the construction of the Olympic Village by 2012 with or without getting the Olympics.

## ENVIRONMENT

With the closure of the Fresh Kills Landfill (Staten Island), all New Yorkers must share equally and fairly in the challenges of disposing of the city's waste. A major step happened with implementation of weekly collection of recyclables in Queens. New York City also requires stronger actions to protect the City's supply of clean drinking water.

Therefore, Queens Civic Congress adopts the following:

1. Support the continuation of the City Council's waste recycling law mandates. Implement the 1989 New York Recycling Plan (Local Law 19) to full mandates.
2. Adopt a plan to dispose of the city's waste not subject to recycling.
3. Mandate community review and notification with legislative oversight for the siting or change in use of waste transfer stations.
4. Restore street trash collection and cleaning of street trash receptacles.
5. Increase frequency of collections, particularly to schools and commercial litter baskets.
6. Strictly enforce Department of Sanitation codes in both residential and commercial districts.
7. Create Community District Sanitation Councils similar to precinct community councils, which would provide an opportunity for problem resolution and coordination of operations.
8. Reduce recycling fines for homeowners and tenants to \$25.00.
9. Continue to collect yard waste.
10. Introduce bottle and can buybacks centers. Use surplus bottle and can deposit money to fund recycling and waste reduction programs and expand the bottle bill to cover additional non-carbonated beverage containers.
11. Establish City and state programs to require the purchase and use of "Clean Air" school buses, taxis, all MTA and private buses, emergency and heavy duty (i.e. Sanitation) vehicles and look at similar programs to apply to fleet vehicles and freight haulers that travel local NYC streets, and establish clean fuel stations accessible to the public and private fleet vehicles and taxis.
12. Enact legislation needed to protect the New York City Watershed with the following elements: A Comprehensive Watershed and Delivery System Management Plan covering the Catskill, Delaware, Croton and Brooklyn/Queens aquifer watersheds; An Annual Watershed Survey and Review of Rules and Regulations and Agreements on Watershed Protection; Reform of Personnel to Protect the Watershed and Water Supply and A Water Conservation Plan.
13. Oppose any increase of former Jamaica Water Supply water into the New York City water system.
14. Take immediate steps to reduce the effects of aircraft noise and pollution from jet exhaust and the dumping of jet fuel.
15. Establish new wetlands legislation to protect waterfront and all remaining riparian wetlands from development and enforce existing waterfront zoning laws.
16. Oppose additional solid waste transfer stations in or near residential areas or the routing of trucks carrying putrescible solid waste through residential areas.

## HEALTH & HOSPITALS

The issue is clear for Queens: the Borough must establish a plan for a "World Class" standard of patient care for all Borough residents.

Therefore, the Queens Civic Congress adopts the following:

1. Execute the plan to put emergency service ambulance garages in local communities.
2. Oppose the disposition or changes of use of any Health and Hospitals Corporation real property without community participation and review.
3. Require prior notification before aerial and street spraying.
4. Ensure adequate healthcare in every neighborhood. In particular, Southeast Queens is seriously underserved by hospitals, requiring lengthy travel to get to full-service health centers.
5. Identify areas where toxic chemicals may cause a hazard to present or future habitation. For example, in Southeast Queens heavy concentrations of PERC at the former Westside Corporation site and in Northeast Queens in the New Hyde Park area a recently discovered industrial chemical dump-site in Nassau County both pose potential groundwater and surface contamination only yards from populous Queens neighborhoods.
6. Study available State data on incidences of various types of cancer to determine if there are, and what causes cancer "hotspots," so that appropriate warnings can be communicated.

## CITY GOVERNANCE

We recognize a need to reform once and for all many city fiscal policies that contribute to annual budget crises, capital budget construction delays and cost increases. Thus, we find that New York City needs a strategic budget plan that addresses the enormous current and projected deficits and borrowing that limit the ability of current and future Mayors to provide essential services to New Yorkers.

New York City needs to introduce real discipline into its budgeting process. New York City must require its agencies to justify service delivery options and program.

Therefore, the Queens Civic Congress adopts the following:

1. The QCC urges government officials to encourage immigrants to become citizens; however, the QCC opposes the extending to non citizens the right to vote in federal, state or local elections for elected officials, referendums, propositions or any other issue on an election ballot.

### Borough Presidents

We consistently have advocated a strong role for borough presidents in the governance of our city. City Charter Chapter 4, particularly section 82, clearly requires borough presidents to monitor service delivery, review all capital projects in the borough, advise the mayor on the formulation of the Preliminary and Executive Budgets, provide technical assistance to community boards, and identify the borough's strategic needs.

Therefore, the Queens Civic Congress adopts the following:

1. Provide the Borough President with the resources to empower each to carry out their charter functions and help New York City weather the current fiscal crisis, rather than cut the borough presidents' budget.
2. Provide the Borough Presidents oversight of borough offices of the Department of City Planning and Department of Buildings.

### Community Boards

The City Charter established Community Boards to bring government closer to the people and provide local input in such areas as the budget, land use and service delivery. The City Charter Chapter 70, Section 2800, d. clearly requires each community board to carry out 21 enumerated functions, yet the budget provides only minimal funds to carry out these mandates. In addition, the Queens Civic Congress has observed a reduction in the appointments of civic and neighborhood representatives to community boards. A

lack of civic expertise significantly reduces the effectiveness of local community boards.

We are also aware of proposals to change the method of appointing community board members. We support continuing the current method of community board appointments by the Borough Presidents and City Council members.

Therefore, the Queens Civic Congress adopts the following:

1. Call on the City to provide adequate funds for the Community Boards to carry out the Charter mandated functions and to ensure the timely delivery of city services to their districts.
2. Call for Borough Presidents and Council Members to give greater emphasis to qualifications and active community participation of prospective community board members in making their appointments.
3. Maintain the current method of appointing community board members.

## Open Government

We welcome the new administration's plans to put more information about agency operations on the internet.

We must also ensure that government allows the public basic access to the seat of government to access public meetings with ease, to access their elected and appointed officials in the halls of government and to criticize (or praise) government at the seat of government. Concerns about security offer no basis for these rules that effectively limit speech and opportunities for the average citizen to influence government.

Voting represents one of the ways that citizens participate in civic life and government. Access to voter registration expands public access and participation in government. In our own city, City Hall must encourage this important form of civic and political involvement through easing participation in the political process. This includes encouraging voter registration at our public schools, colleges, and other educational institutions and community and faith-based organizations.

Therefore, the Queens Civic Congress adopts the following:

1. Require city government to report routinely basic information about agency operations to community boards, borough boards and council members and borough presidents.
2. Call on the government of our City to ensure access to City Hall and its Plaza to the people.
3. Call on the city to encourage voter registration through the appropriate use of our public schools, colleges, and other educational institutions and community and faith-based organizations.

## CITY BUDGET/FISCAL POLICY

Budgeting for the delivery of city services where appropriate by borough and community district, rather than the centralized approach to decision-making, introduces flexibility and efficiencies. It directs services based on need and an understanding that all communities will receive a fair share of services and programs, just not necessarily the same mix of services and programs.

A review of long and short-term capital budget financing issues indicates a need exists to develop a longer-term city capital plan that makes sense. The current four and five year plans (four years for the city capital budget; five for the Department of Education) fail to address actual spending capabilities and might not adequately reflect neighborhood needs and priorities. A longer-term debt-financing plan would supplement the strategy to provide needed additional capital financing. This would serve to identify the City's real debt needs based on its real ability to advance projects, once initiated for funding (inclusion in the "capital commitment plan"). It would also be a basis around which to develop a coalition to seek federal and state funding commitments that recognize the regional benefits of much of the City's proposed capital program.

Therefore, the Queens Civic Congress adopts the following:

1. Implement a new fiscal strategic approach that uses budget surpluses to reduce existing debt and fund some capital projects on a pay-as-you-go basis.
2. Rather than mere across-the-board spending caps, a strategic review of each year's annual spending to be justified rather than base-lined.
3. Reshape New York City's Annual Executive Expense Budget to reflect the need to deliver services based on the varying needs of each of the five boroughs and the diverse needs of communities.
4. Set capital priorities by community needs and that support neighborhood development, including a borough-by-borough grid of capital spending by agency (This also includes schools, housing, court facilities, highways, sewers, water supply, etc.).
5. Develop longer-term city capital plan that makes sense by outlining a ***Strategic Capital Program*** that identifies the City's real debt needs based on its real ability to advance projects.
6. Shift responsibility for the preparation of the Mayor's Management Report from the Mayor's Office of Operations to the Independent Budget Office and rename the report the City Management Report
7. Develop a coalition to seek federal and state funding commitments based on the regional benefits of much of the City's proposed capital program.
8. Improve virtually non-existent legislative and executive oversight of the management of the City's capital plan and capital projects.
9. Pass a "Federal Brooks law" style Qualified Based Selection (QBS) professional contracting law barring bid fee cuts [Int. No. 301].





Presented by:

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