



Queens Civic Congress

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QUEENS CIVICS' BUDGET COMMENTS TO QUEENS BORO BOARD

In testimony presented today (Tuesday, February 19, 2008) to the Queens Borough Board, Queens Civic Congress [QCC] called for seven day libraries, more resources to protect neighborhoods from rampant overdevelopment and real estate tax equity for homeowners and tenants. The statement, presented at Borough Hall by QCC President Corey B. Bearak, follows:

Borough President Marshall and Borough Board Members:

Thank you for affording Queens Civic Congress the opportunity to comment on the City's Preliminary Expense and Capital Budget. As an umbrella group of 100 civic organizations, our membership represents every community in the borough.

This year, Queens Civic Congress urges the City Council and the Queens Borough Board make our branch libraries true community resources by ensuring these signature facilities open SEVEN (7) DAYS a week and eight to ten (8-10) hours per day. Zoning and building concern continue to plague our communities. Too many Queens communities await rezonings; the waits often go back five years or more. If the Department of City Planning lacks the resources, it must add planners or other staff. Queens Civic Congress would welcome the staffing whether the agency redeploys resources, borrows help that City Hall re-assigns to aid City Planning or gains the ability to add new staff. The Mayor made a commitment before his reelection and he must be held to that commitment..

The Buildings Department (DOB), responding to the concerns of Queens Civic Congress and others has made administrative and proposed legislative reforms to improve its capabilities; resource-wise, Queens Civic Congress urges the Borough Board to support a simple concept: make the DOB use the revenue it collects for plan examination and code enforcement for those purposes.

The last two fiscal years, the Council directed \$10,000 to enable Queens Civic Congress Foundation, a non-profit organization founded by the civic congress but with its distinct board, by-laws and corporate status; it assists our member organizations with their work on zoning and related land use and code issues. Since Fiscal Year 2006, we have requested \$50,000 for this purpose to empower our civic association members to conduct zoning and related studies throughout the borough. We seek that amount this year. Specifically, we seek this amount for the Queens Civic Congress Foundation to provide consulting services and materials such as maps, photography, photocopying for civics seeking rezoning and landmark districting.

There remains the need to review neighborhood zoning at a pace greater than what the City Planning Department can or will undertake. The Foundation works directly with civic associations in the borough to present preservation and re-zoning proposals to city agencies. The resources received to date have empowered our member civics through the purchase of “Green Books” and City Planning “Zoning Handbooks” for every civic association. This year we will provide the historic District's Council Preservation Handbook. It also supported the workshops and forums – open to the public – to assist civic and community leaders and concerned community members address such technical issues involving zoning and landmarking and historical preservation. In the past year, it also supports forums on Buildings and code enforcement, Parks and transit issues.

This year, we intend to provide each civic with the Historic Districts Council handbook on how to create an historic districts and supplementary materials for each forum and, if practical, make forum and workshop materials also available through our QueensCivicCongress.org website. We also are exploring the best means to institutionalize some of the programming and technical assistance on a borough-wide basis and may come back to you with more specifics in that regard.

Queens Civic Congress also recommends our elected officials look to our [CIVIC 2030](#) platform for cost-effective measures that address the City's structural deficit; the Queens Civic Congress fiscal platform finds more preferable the use of “pay-as-you-go capital” and capital debt reduction (pay-down). Reducing future debt service and costs reduces the size of the future budget and saves more funds than any set aside of dollars in a special fund.

[Real](#) Property Tax Reform remains an important concern and with the fiscal outlook, the possibility of some \$2 billion - conservative numbers today - through QCC's real estate tax [reform](#), certainly merits a close look. The Congress also recommends personal income tax [reform](#) that should realize more than \$1 billion. Our tax reform proposals will help more New Yorkers who need the help – middle, moderate and lower income homeowners and tenants with tax bills that approximate the payments made before the infamous 25% (that was the actual percent increase on homeowners' bills when the rate increased 18% a few years back.). These homeowners need \$100 a month, not \$400 per year. We do not include our Non-resident Income Tax reform which should raise nearly \$1.8 billion as a budget proposal in recognition of the compelling need for additional revenue to support the MTA capital plan; this revenue reform raises absolutely NONE of the problems – from fairness and equity to efficiency and enormity – associated with the congestion tax which the Congress opposes; this revenue measure shares the proceeds with our Long Island and northern suburbs so it prove passable those region's state legislators review it and realize their constituents' dollars would fund mass transit projects including in their home counties.

Queens Civic Congress stands ready to work with our elected officials as we all seek to move our City forward. Thank you.

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