



# Community Board 7

## Borough of Queens

Auburndale, Bay Terrace, Beechhurst, Clearview, College Point, Downtown Flushing, East Flushing, Flushing, Malba, Murray Hill, Queensborough Hill, Whitestone, Linden Hill, and Willets Point

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Donovan Richards, Jr.  
*Queens Borough President*

Eugene T. Kelty Jr.  
*Chairperson*  
Marilyn McAndrews  
*District Manager*

### Community Board #7 Queens

### PUBLIC HEARING & REGULAR MEETING

### Minutes

Monday, June 24, 2024

Meeting was held in the basement of St Luke Church, 16-34 Clintonville Street

#### **Board Members Present:**

Charles Apelian

Kaily Cheng

Kim Cody

Arlene Fleishman

Richard Forman

Fred Fu

Doreen Gatanas

Pablo Hernandez

Cody Herrmann

Jeff Huang

Lawrence Hughes

Eugene Kelty

Esther Lee

Dr. Wensong Li

Frank Macchio

Betsy Mak

Barbara McHugh

Selma Moses

John Park

Terence Park

Dr. Vipul Patel

Yacov Pshtissky

Frank Quatela

Kris Ram

Paul Rifino

Kevin Shields

Warren Schreiber

Matthew Silverstein

Josh Sussman

Saleem Syed

Joseph Sweeney

John Tsavalos

Peter Tu

Maggie Wong

Lulu Yang

Dian Yu

Linna Yu

Rachel Zhang

Lei Zhao

**Absent:** James Cervino

**Excused:** Nicholas Corrado, Vincent Gianelli, Phil Konigsberg, Wendy Louie, Rev. Richard McEachern, Sergio Nicolich; Maureen Regan, Harpreet Wahan, Clarissa Wong

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#### **Community Board #7 Staff**

Marilyn McAndrews, District Manager

Mary O'Neill, Community Coordinator

Anne Krzyzanowski, Community Assistant

#### **Elected Officials**

Wei Lu Su - State Senator Liu's office

Koshy O. Thomas - Assemblyman Braunstein's office

Tony Cao – Assemblyman Kim's office

Alan Ong – Assemblywoman Rozic's office

Councilwoman Vickie Paladino  
Alie Ziraschi - Councilwoman Paladino's office

Lucia Parades - Councilwoman Ung's office  
Georgia Katsalis - Queens Borough President's office

**Chairman Eugene Kelty** opened meeting at 7 pm. Pledge of Allegiance to our Flag and a moment of silence in honor of all who fought for our freedom and our country and never forget those who gave their lives.

Announcements from Elected Officials. Announcements from Chairman Kelty.

### Public Hearing

#### Citywide "City of Yes Part 3- Residential Zoning"

**Charles Apelian, Land Use Chair**

**Chuck Apelian:** Our Land Use Committee unanimously denied the "City of Yes" with specific reasons.

#### **Joy Chen, Borough Planner, Department of City Planning Queens:**

This is the first time that a comprehensive pro-housing plan is being made by the NYC Department of City Planning and it is a City-wide text amendment. There is a housing shorting crisis, rent is extremely high, and many people are homeless. This proposal will have an impact in every neighborhood. Some proposals are for low density areas and town centered apartment buildings. There will be programs for homeowners which will allow them to make Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's). Construction has slowed in the low-density areas which has contributed to the city housing shortage and construction has stopped in many areas. Department of City Planning wants to create more housing without impacting these low-density areas.

**Frank Macchio:** What is restrictive housing in low-density area? A low-density zone is meant to be low-density.

**Joy Chen:** The zoning will remain the same. The new proposal will allow modestly sized apartment buildings above a store if there's a commercial overlay. The low-density will be slightly increased.

**Charles Apelian:** This will not be restrictive. Our Board did a lot of work from 2005 to map and maintain these low-density areas. We are not alone. Other parts of the City have the same problems.

**Warren Schreiber:** Will the new apartments that are built over stores be as-of-right?

**Charles Apelian:** Yes.

**Joy Chen:** Transit Oriented Development is for low-density housing proposals. The lots have to be over 5,000 square feet and within 1/2 mile near public transit. These buildings will be between 3-5 stories high.

**Frank Macchio:** What about parking near those homes?

**Matthew Mbamelu, Senior Urban Designer, NYC Department of City Planning:** There are no parking requirements. The general goal of this proposal is to provide more housing.

**Charles Apelian:** To further explain this proposal, all single-family homes within a half-mile radius of the LIRR can be demolished and 3-5 story apartments can be built instead, **without parking**.

**Lei Zhao:** Can you clarify the bullet-point about the over 5,000 square feet? Does every lot qualify?

**Charles Apelian:** Yes

**Matthew Mbamelu:** The lots can be combined if they are on the short end of the block. On sites that are over 5,000 square feet and located on the short end of a block or are facing a wide street that is over 75 ft wide.

**Councilwoman Paladino:** 5,000 SF is a lot that is 50 x 100.

**Joy Chen:** ADU's (Accessory Dwelling Units) will allow people who own a home to add more housing and increase flexibility. Maximum new sizes are 800 SF. These allow multi-generational families more space so they can live together. This plan has been successful in other cities.

**Charles Apelian:** These can be built in a basement, an attic, a backyard or a garage.

**Kim Cody:** NYC does not have enough building inspectors to inspect current buildings. How are they going to inspect these new constructions?

**Matthew Silverstein:** The DOB is issuing countless violations for quality-of-life issues. What considerations has the City made for quality-of-life issues once ADU's are built?

**Matthew Mbamelu:** The permit filing goes to the DOB to make sure the construction is up to standards.

**Charles Apelian:** People are taking advantage of this now and will take further advantage if COY is approved.

**Joy Chen:** **Universal Affordability Preference (UAP)** will increase the opportunity for more affordable housing. This will allow for apartment buildings to be at least 20% larger. As long as the extra space is occupied by affordable housing. This will allow for affordable housing everywhere in the city.

**Frank Macchio:** What zoning districts does this apply to?

**Charles Apelian:** R6 and above.

**Cody Herrmann:** Will these homes be affordable to people making less than \$65,000?

**Matthew Mbamelu:** The AMI range is 65% of that area.

**Joy Chen:** **Lift Costly Parking Mandates.** This would make parking optional for all new buildings. A lot of parking spaces could be used for housing. It is extremely expensive to provide parking. The parking mandates drive up rent. Parking will be optional for all new residential development.

**Yacov Pshtissky:** Public transportation is a disaster. There will be no place to park.

**Councilwoman Paladino:** The City does not want us to drive. The City is telling us what we need or don't need.

**Joy Chen:** **Convert Non-Residential Buildings to Housing** to reuse space in non-residential areas.

**Frank Macchio:** This will make neighborhoods denser. What about the infrastructure?

**Matthew Mbamelu:** Just because this allows for additional building, doesn't mean that there are other rules and regulations for building. There will need to be an Environmental Impact Study done for new buildings. If an office building is converted to housing, the developer will have to list the number of units.

**Charles Apelian:** Whenever a zoning change is made there has to be an EIS. If there's a problem the developer cannot go ahead. However, overall, The City of Yes says it's ok to proceed without a further study.

**Rachel Zhang:** When you mention infrastructure, please also remember hospitals. Do you have any number of how many people will move into an area?

**Matthew Mbamelu:** Citywide is about 100,000 units.

**Joy Chen:** **Small and Shared Housing**, which includes dorms and will enable conversions of all types of housing including studio & one-bedrooms, where currently these are not allowed. Shared housing is a residence which have bedrooms and share the kitchen, bathrooms and other common facilities.

**Joy Chen:** **Eliminate areas with Contextual Infill** applies to buildings such as NYCHA sites and dorms that have developable space. This proposal will eliminate the barriers for new buildings that are now in place.

**Joy Chen:** **Creation of New Zoning Districts** are in districts that can only be mapped with mandatory inclusionary housing (MIH). These include district with zoning above 12 FAR, highest density districts. New housing opportunities in higher medium density districts. New developments will still go through ULURP.

**Joy Chen:** **Updates to MIH** will be a stand-alone option to require 20% of apartments be set aside at average 40 % AMI making this deeply affordable. It can be used alone rather than having to be paired with a higher AMI option. The proposal aims to equalize MIH FARs to districts where the universal affordability preference is higher.

**Joy Chen: Universal Affordability.** When compared with the existing MIH, it will equalize the two options. It will allow more affordable units to be developed compared to the MIH program.

**Joy Chen: 100% Affordable Projects,** this is one of HPD's program with subsidies & incentives. These are rare. It will reduce conflicts with existing term-sheets and subsidy programs.

**Joy Chen: Sliver Law** this imposed the building height limit in narrow lots.

**Matthew Mbamelu:** If a developer builds on a narrow lot, their height is height restricted, even though the zone permits a higher amount. Under the new proposal they can build up to the maximum height.

**Joy Chen: Quality Housing Amenity Changes,** creates incentives to build community recreational spaces, laundry rooms. These rules will be extended to all multi-family homes.

**Matthew Mbamelu:** These are not mandatory. This is currently required in higher density districts.

**Joy Chen: Landmark Transferable Rights,** this will streamline the development rights transfer. Sometimes this will allow more housing to be built on your site.

**Joy Chen: Simplify the Railroad Right-of-Way,** currently there is a special permit for building in a railroad right of way. This is vacant land with old tracks. If a lot is over 4-acres, the developer can apply for a right of way.

#### **Public Speakers:**

**Nabil Khatri:** Supports additional housing, would like to continue living in his current neighborhood. This is telling residents that they can do what they want with their properties.

**Catherine Banis:** I am concerned that the schools are already overcrowded, and the police are overworked. I have a child in High School. There are no places for teens to go afterschool.

**Brock Weiner (CPCTA):** Asking CB 7 to vote "no" on this proposal. The City is not prepared for this

**Carmen Mirtsoopoulos (We Love Whitestone):** The City is putting the Cart before the horse. No one has taking into consideration the Fire Department, Police, Schools are overcrowded. What is the City planning to do when they open this up to greater density, there is no plan in place. There is no support behind it.

**Joseph Scurturo:** Building 100,000 units will kill the City, financially & mentally. There will be a mass exodus. In Florida, a new school & Fire Department is provided for every 700 homes.

**George Stein (VP of North Bayside Civic Association):** I am urging everyone to call multiple Council Members every day to vote against this.

**Maria Becce:** My husband & I purchased a one-family home in 1981. It has open green space and restrictive zoning in a low-density area. COY will strip away century-old characteristics of my beautiful neighborhood that is listed on the National & NYS registry of Historic Places. A piece of NY history will be lost forever. I do not want to live in a neighborhood that jams people into dangerous basement & garage apartments. Backyards are meant for green lawns. NYC Planning Dept has chosen one-size-fits-all. Please vote "no".

**Yiatin Chu:** I am a homeowner and a parent. We are outraged at the Mayor's proposal that would destroy our communities. Many of us put our life savings into our homes and roots in our communities. The COY will throw uncertainties into property values. This ill-conceived plan will degrade our quality of life. We are already stressed with the lack of parking. We need investments in sewers, electric lines, road work & schools. Each community & neighborhood should be respected for their unique composition. I urge CB 7 to vote "no".

**Edward Brumgnach:** Everything I wanted to say has been said. Please vote "no" for the COY

**Maria Fiocca:** I live within a half mile of the Broadway Flushing train station. I have concerns about my beautiful neighborhood. If a neighbor sells their home, a developer could build a six-family home. People

would come in and overdevelop our area. My neighbors and I have nice landscaping. I don't want the value of my home to be cut in half because the City wants to rectify issues in other areas.

**Tracy Koutsoulidakis** (A Better College Point Civic): We support everything that was said. This would put everyone in danger. People could die in flooded basements. Please vote against COY.

**Christine Thornhill**: I am a homeowner and felt safe in my home until the COY was proposed. I felt that COY was kept secret. The Mayor ran on a platform of safety. I researched the landmark laws and if COY goes through, we will not be able to landmark Queens. We need to landmark cultural diversity, a sense of place, street scaping and City's history, Queens is the borough that is the most diverse in the US. It's the cultural mecca of the world. All of this would change. We don't want to lose what we have here.

### **Committee Recommendation:**

**Charles Apelian**: The City is responsible for putting together an EIS before changes of this magnitude can be approved. It must prove that sewers and all other utilities are in place before making these zoning changes. I guarantee you this is not happening. Once COY is approve there will be no EIS. Since 2005, our Board approved 13 contextual re-zonings because our neighborhoods were getting destroyed. One of the largest examples was the Waldheim District, where one & two-family homes existed on lots zoned R7. Savy developers were buying lots and developing apartment buildings. This destroyed the integrity of the entire neighborhood. The City Planning Commissioner wants to destroy this. Everything we worked for and wanted to protect will go out the door under this plan that isn't well defined.

If there's a way to maximize something, developers will do it. Altruism goes out the door. They will eliminate all parking requirements. We once had infill zoning. There is R4 Infill zoning along Bell Boulevard. It looks like wall-to-wall buildings. Government is reactionary, and this is a reaction to the problems that the City faces overall. They don't really know how to address it beside doing this across the entire City. **None of this** will address affordable housing.

A great example of proper planning of affordable housing is Willets Point. I am extremely proud of the work we did. We created a community for 10,000 people, to live and work which will be 100% affordable. That's an example of planning to creating housing, schools and business. It wasn't designed to put "cottages" in a back yard or place someone in a basement. The COY is not for us.

- We oppose TOD's because they would allow a wide berth of development within a half mile radius from transit hubs. A half mile from downtown Flushing goes north to 29th Road. Everything in-between will be subject to transit-oriented development. The same thing will happen in the southern direction. The LIRR runs through our large R2A zone. All neighborhoods within a half a mile on both sides of the train stations will be destroyed. Transit oriented development should only be placed on the blocks adjacent to the stations.
- We do not support District fixes, as it will allow residents to flaunt what has been built on their property instead of going through proper channels to get permits.
- We are opposed to Universal Affordability Preference this will give 20% additional bulk. There's nothing to support the additional bulk.
- We do not support lifting parking mandates.
- Convert Non-Residential Buildings to Housing, this also needs infrastructure.
- Absolutely opposed to any small, shared housing.
- We oppose the new zoning districts because they have zero parking.
- We oppose Quality Housing Amenity Changes.

- Landmark Transferable Rights was supported because we deal with this with Churches and no-for-profit organizations in the area. Bowne Street Church was landmarked, and they comped three parishes. The repairs were becoming too costly. There was a successful air-rights conversion at the landmarked Flushing Town Hall to the former Sears site.

**Warren Schreiber:** My concern is with the Campus Infill, which the Committee voted in favor to support. Campus Infill for the most part will do away with greenspace. One-half acre is not a lot of property. This would take away the gardens from where I live in a Garden Apartment. This would allow campus infill on church property. It would all be as-of-right. I would like to change this to 'do not support'.

**Chairman Kelty:** I think this is a complicated procedure and this is not the proper way that the City should be doing this. When we did the zoning changes to Flushing and College Point, we identified the projects specifically to the area. When DCP talks about the ADU's, they think this is a family thing and everyone would be happy. In reality the property owners will rent their garages to anyone in order to make a profit. This is not make believe TV land - - this is real world. I would rather take each piece separately.

**Terence Park:** It is clear to me that COY is very poorly planned, considering our City's needs.

**Cody Herrmann:** I met with the Special Flushing Waterfront re-zoning and with other city groups to come up with a downtown Flushing re-zoning plan. A lot was meant to restrict development that would cause more gentrification and displacement. COY goes against the protection we tried to put in place. I oppose the COY.

**Pablo Hernandez:** Currently the City does not enforce zoning. How will they enforce regulations if COY is passed, will they know how many people are living in a house that has been divided. There could be many people living in what was a single-family house. This would impact the community.

**Betsy Mak:** There are many vacancies in warehouse apartments that are rent stabilized because of the new rent laws. There is a lot property tax lost due to the vacancies.

**Lei Zhao:** What would drive the building of the affordable housing, how will it be funded? There is no companion to this. There is no plan to build affordable housing. The cost of building is prohibitable to most homeowners. Developers will see the opportunities and buy out houses to build apartments.

**Chairman Kelty:** The motion is to deny the COY seconded by Frank Macchio.

**36 – In favor**

**1 – Against**

**The motion carries to deny the City of Yes Part 3 - Residential Zoning.**

### Public Participation

No Public Participation

**Meeting ended: 10:15 pm**

**Respectfully Submitted**

**Anne Krzyzanowski,**

**Community Assistant**