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CONTACT:

Edward Skyler / Jordan Barowitz - (212) 788-2958

Rachaele Raynoff (City Planning) - (212) 720-3471

Dan Andrews (BP Marshall) - (718) 268-2640

MAYOR MICHAEL R. BLOOMBERG AND QUEENS BOROUGH PRESIDENT HELEN MARSHALL ANNOUNCE THE REZONING OF QUEENS NEIGHBORHOODS TO HELP CURB OVER-DEVELOPMENT

Several Zoning Plans Approved or in Pipeline; More Communities to Come

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, Queens Borough President Helen Marshall and Director of City Planning Amanda M. Burden today announced at Queens Borough Hall that more than a dozen neighborhoods in Queens have been or are being rezoned to help curb over-development. Many of the neighborhoods under review were last rezoned in 1961. With new housing starts in Queens at the highest point in decades, the administration is working to stop out-of-character development in Queens' residential neighborhoods. The changes in zoning regulations will align new construction with the character of the borough's neighborhoods and will ensure that communities can gracefully accommodate new development.

"For many people in Queens, there are few issues more important than over-development," said Mayor Bloomberg. "Over-development can radically alter the traditional appearance and character of entire neighborhoods and often involves illegal construction, non-compliance with zoning rules, and poor quality construction. Our Administration is working with Borough President Helen Marshall, local elected officials and leaders of local civic and homeowners associations to address this pressing issue in Queens as we have done in other parts of the City."

City Planning, in consultation with the Queens Borough President's Zoning Task Force, is conducting neighborhood zoning studies in ten communities throughout the borough, including Bayside, College Point, East Flushing, portions of Jamaica, Kew Gardens, Whitestone and Richmond Hill, and portions of Woodside, Maspeth and Springfield Gardens. In addition, rezoning actions are already undergoing public review for four neighborhoods: Bellerose, Brookville, Jamaica Hill and Royal Ranch. These neighborhoods would add to the three rezonings already completed in Forest Hills/Rego Park, Holliswood and North Corona.

"City Planning's rezoning proposals further the Bloomberg Administration's goal of reinforcing the distinctive character of residential neighborhoods in one of the State's fastest growing counties," said Director Burden, "Our changes will preserve the types of homes in Queens neighborhoods that their residents prize. And we will channel higher density housing growth to areas that have infrastructure, such as transportation, to sustain it."

"The Queens Borough President's Zoning Task Force has played a pivotal role in rezoning more than two dozen neighborhoods across the borough - neighborhoods threatened with out-of-scale development due to improper zoning that was put in place almost a half-century ago," said Borough President Marshall. "Many neighborhoods, however, are still vulnerable to over and illegal development that exceeds the limits of what is reasonable and responsible. I want to thank the Mayor and Commissioner Burden for recognizing the need to protect neighborhoods from over-development by means of appropriate rezoning. Their support and cooperation helps ensure that new construction will be in keeping with the existing character of communities."

From 1990 to 2000, the population of Queens grew by 277,781, the largest numerical growth of any county in the State. With new housing permit requests increasing, that growth has continued unabated. From 1995 to 1999 Queens' averaged 1,360 permits new housing permits a year; between 2000 to 2003, the average rose to 3,460, an increase of more than 150%. After years of predictable, homogenous construction, residential neighborhoods have seen a surge in development. Neighborhoods are being besieged with out-of-character multi-family housing replacing one-and two-family detached and semi-detached homes.

The zoning regulations adopted more than 40 years ago were a broad-brush and a "one-size-fits all" approach that allowed not only one- and two-family houses, but multi-family housing, including townhouses and garden apartments. The rezonings are based on a careful analysis of the built character of the neighborhoods. The new zoning is carefully drawn, and restricts housing type, so areas characterized by single family, or one- or two-family detached houses are maintained.

A rezoning entails careful block-by-block inspection of the existing structures in each neighborhood. Planners identify a zoning district that matches that majority of homes and propose remapping the districts. After required environmental analyses, the proposal is subject to a thorough review by local community boards, the Borough President, City Planning Commission and the City Council as part of the charter mandated Land Use before it can be adopted.

The Queens planning initiatives are part of the Mayor's Citywide strategy to balance the need for housing with neighborhood preservation. Other over-development initiatives have been successfully implemented in Staten Island and Throgs Neck in the Bronx.

About City Planning

The Department of City Planning is responsible for the City's physical and socioeconomic planning, including land use and environmental review; preparation of plans and policies; and provision of technical assistance and planning information to government agencies, public officials, and community boards.