



## Kew Gardens and Richmond Hill - **Approved!**

### Overview

#### **Background**

Richmond Hill and Kew Gardens are two of the older communities in the Borough of Queens. The area is known for its quiet tree-lined streets, its mix of large homes and 1930s apartment buildings, its proximity to Forest Park and Maple Grove Cemetery, and its excellent transit connections to Manhattan .

The Department of City Planning proposes to rezone all or portions of 140 blocks in the neighborhoods of Kew Gardens and Richmond Hill, Community District 9, Queens, in an effort to address the communities' concerns that recent development trends are out of context with the existing character, while also providing for much needed housing opportunities along appropriate growth corridors. The proposal encourages new mixed-use development along Jamaica Avenue, promotes housing production on wide streets near the express subway station, and protects interior residential blocks by adjusting zoning district boundaries and designating new zoning districts that match the existing character.



#### **Study Area**

The study area is bounded by the Union Turnpike, Queens Boulevard, the Van Wyck Expressway, Jamaica Avenue, 100th Street, and Park Lane South.

#### **Project Goals and Objectives**

The Kew Gardens and Richmond Hill communities are concerned that the current zoning of the study area encourages development that is not in character with the existing neighborhoods. The Department of City Planning has studied the Kew Gardens - Richmond Hill area in order to develop a comprehensive and fine-grained rezoning plan that addresses this concern and to identify opportunities to revise zoning designations to reflect the current built environment of the area.

The study has concluded with zoning recommendations that address the following objectives:

- Reinforce established built contexts and prevent out of character development.
- Recognize existing residential development in locations where such development is currently prohibited.
- Foster higher density residential and mixed-use development in appropriate locations near transit.

#### **Public Review**

On November 1, 2004, the Department of City Planning certified the [Uniform Land Use Review Procedure](#) application for the Kew Gardens - Richmond Hill rezoning to begin the formal public review process. Both Community Board 9 and the Queens Borough President issued recommendations in favor of the application. The City Planning Commission held a public hearing on January 5, 2005 and approved the rezoning on February 2, 2005. ( [Read the CPC Report](#)). On March 9, 2005, the City Council adopted the zoning changes which are now in effect.

For more information on the Kew Gardens – Richmond Hill Rezoning, please contact the Queens Office of the Department of City Planning at (718) 286-3170.

## Kew Gardens and Richmond Hill - **Approved!** Neighborhood Character and Land Use

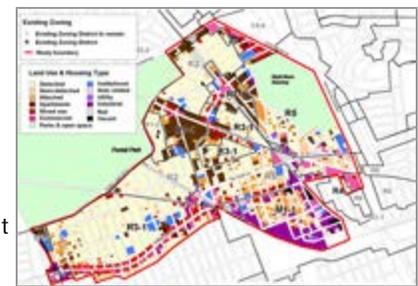
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Richmond Hill was developed beginning in the 1870s on land surrounding the then newly constructed Richmond Hill passenger depot. In 1910, the tract of land that had served as the Richmond Hill Golf Club began to be redeveloped as the new community of Kew Gardens, spurred by the opening of a new Long Island Railroad commuter station. By the 1930's six- and seven-story, brick apartment buildings were introduced near the LIRR Kew Gardens stop, giving the area a wide range of housing types.

In the past four years there has been an increase in development in the rezoning area. More than 80 residential buildings containing more than 400 new dwelling units have been built. Most of the new buildings are located on the area's mid-blocks and are two- to three-story, attached and semi-detached brick structures with two to six dwelling units per building. Other new development in the study area has included six- to ten-story condominium buildings, a small shopping center and several automotive-related retail and service developments.

### **Land Use**

The Kew Gardens – Richmond Hill rezoning area has a wide range of land uses including multiple-family walk-up and elevator buildings, one and two-family residential buildings, schools, auto-related commercial uses, retail and office uses, mixed residential and commercial buildings and light industrial, transportation and warehouse uses. Approximately two-thirds of the lots within the rezoning area consist of one and two-family houses, while another 13 percent includes multi-family apartment buildings, most of which are located in Kew Gardens. Mixed-use residential buildings with ground floor commercial uses constitute roughly 9 percent of lots within the rezoning area, and are concentrated along Jamaica Avenue, and to a lesser extent, Lefferts Boulevard.



Land Use Map

[View a larger image](#)

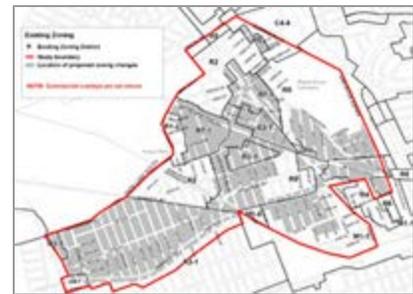
Retail and other solely commercial buildings account for nearly three percent of the lots, while industrial uses are attributable to two percent of the area's lots. Jamaica Avenue holds the greatest concentration of commercial uses in the area, housing a wide variety of local retail and service establishments. Retail uses are also found along Lefferts Boulevard and Metropolitan Avenue and these tend to cater to LIRR commuters and nearby residents. Industrial, transportation and auto-related uses are found south of Jamaica Avenue as well as in the area east of the LIRR tracks and south of Hillside Avenue. Vacant land and parking lots constitute about 3.5 percent of the land uses and are located primarily on Jamaica Avenue. Public facilities/schools account for a bit more than one percent of the lots in the rezoning area, and open spaces are less than one percent of the area's lots.

## Kew Gardens and Richmond Hill - **Approved!**

### Existing and Proposed Zoning

#### Existing Zoning

The existing zoning of the Kew Gardens and Richmond Hill neighborhoods has been in place since the New York City Zoning Resolution was adopted in 1961. Though it does take into account the wide variety of housing types and uses in the area, the existing zoning is not representative of the current development patterns. As seen on the existing zoning map, most of the area closest to Forest Park, south of Park Lane South is zoned with low-density, single-family detached districts (R1-2 and R2). Two areas are zoned with a medium-density residential district that allows tower developments of 13 to 17 stories (R7-1): the first is found along 118th Street from Metropolitan Avenue down to 84th Avenue and the second is found along Austin Street near the Long Island Railroad (LIRR) station. The remainder of the residentially zoned portions of the study area is zoned R5 (general residence district) with pockets of R3-1 (one- or two-family detached and semi-detached homes).



Existing Zoning Map  
[View a larger image](#)

The Richmond Hill area between 101st Street, Myrtle Avenue, and Jamaica Avenue, is zoned R3-1 and is developed with detached one- and two-family homes. South of Jamaica Avenue and between the two LIRR rail lines in Richmond Hill East, there is an area zoned M1-1 that is developed with transportation and light industrial uses directly adjacent to the rail and with one- and two-family homes on the interior blocks.

Commercial activity is concentrated along Queens Boulevard, on Lefferts Boulevard near the LIRR station, on Metropolitan Avenue at 118th Street, in the southeast corner where Hillside and Metropolitan Avenues intersect, and along Jamaica Avenue.

#### Proposed Zoning

To revise the existing zoning in Kew Gardens and Richmond Hill, the Department of City Planning is proposing a fine-grained, [contextual zoning](#) plan that has four objectives:

1. Prevent out-of-character development in areas developed primarily with one- and two-family residences;
2. Reinforce the built conditions in areas developed with multi-family buildings;
3. Match zoning to reflect area uses; and
4. Direct residential and mixed-use growth to areas that can most support it.

Specific proposed zoning district changes are discussed below by objective and neighborhood. Please see the [proposed zoning map](#) for a depiction of the new zoning district boundaries.



Proposed Zoning Map  
[View a larger image](#)

#### 1. The proposed zoning will prevent out-of-character development in areas developed primarily with one- and two-family residences:

##### Kew Gardens

- In the center of Kew Gardens, an area bounded by 82 nd Avenue, Austin Street, Cuthbert Road and Grenfell Street would be changed to a proposed R4-1 district. These blocks are developed with a mix of detached and semi-detached buildings, as well as commercial and mixed-use buildings that serve the Kew Gardens LIRR stop and the Kew Gardens neighborhood. The proposed R4-1 district has a maximum FAR of 0.9 and allows detached and semi-detached single and two family housing. The R4-1 district would also deter tower-development on this stretch of Lefferts Boulevard. This proposed zone would replace existing R2 and R7-1 zoning districts.
- An area south of Kew Gardens Road and north of Hillside Avenue and an area south of Metropolitan Avenue and north of Jamaica Avenue would be changed to R4-1 districts. The blocks in this area have been developed predominately with detached and semi-detached one- and two-family residences on narrow lots. To ensure that new developments will continue to be compatible with the scale of existing buildings, the R4-1 district is proposed for these blocks in place of the existing R5 zoning district.
- The R3-1 districts on both sides of Metropolitan Avenue east of Lefferts Boulevard would be changed to R4A

districts. The R4A zoning would preserve the current one- and two-family detached character currently found in the area.

- Directly south of Maple Grove Cemetery and west of the Van Wyck Expressway, several blocks would be changed to an R4A district. The maximum FAR allowed in this sub-area would decrease from 1.25 to 0.9 and only one- and two-family detached housing will be allowed. These new regulations closely mirror the current housing stock in the area and replace the existing R5 zoning district.
- The existing R2 district that lies south of Park Lane South and north of Metropolitan Avenue would be expanded to take in portions of several blocks of existing R5 and R7-1 districts. These lots are developed with single-family, detached houses and the R2 district better matches this housing type.
- The area along Kew Gardens Road near Union Turnpike currently zoned R5 would be eliminated and the existing adjacent R2 and C4-4 districts would be extended to better reflect existing development patterns.

#### *Richmond Hill*

- The 23 blocks south of 85th Avenue and east of 104th Street would be changed to a contextual R3X district and the 11 blocks south of Park Lane South and east of 102nd Street would be changed to an R4A district to keep future development in context with the current built environment. The proposed R3X allows the same maximum FAR of 0.6 as the current R3-1 district, but it allows only one- and two-family detached residences, which would help the area maintain its current characteristic of large houses placed on large lots. The proposed R4A district has a higher maximum FAR of 0.9, but brings more of the residences into compliance by allowing detached housing on smaller, narrower lots than the current R3-1 zoning district.

## **2. Zoning changes would be made to reinforce the current built conditions in multi-family residence districts:**

#### *Kew Gardens*

- The Lefferts Boulevard corridor from the LIRR tracks south to Hillside Avenue and the south side of Metropolitan Avenue east of Lefferts Boulevard would be changed to an R6B district. The proposed R6B district is contextual and the maximum allowable FAR of 2.0 for this zone, as well as the maximum building height of 50 feet, would keep future development with the current built conditions and over three-quarters of the existing buildings will now have a complying FAR. The R6B district would replace the existing R5 and R7-1 districts.
- Two areas developed primarily with six- and seven-story apartment buildings would be changed from R7-1 to R7A districts. The first area is located south of Metropolitan Avenue and north of 85th Avenue and the other area is located east of Cuthbert Road, north of 125th Street and west of Talbot Street. The proposed contextual R7A district would be more compatible with the older apartment buildings located in the sub-area as the Quality Housing Program would be mandatory and the allowable FAR would increase to 4.0, while the maximum height would be limited to 80 feet.

#### *Richmond Hill*

- To better match the existing development in the downtown Richmond Hill area at Hillside and Myrtle Avenues, a contextual R6B district north and west of Hillside Avenue and a contextual R6A district south and east of Hillside Avenue are proposed. These districts will replace the existing R5 and R3-1 districts.
- The blocks west of 102nd Street, north of Jamaica Avenue and south of 85th Road would be changed to an R4 district. The proposed R4 district would increase residential FAR from 0.6 in the current R3-1 district to 0.9 (or 1.35 FAR if R4 infill housing regulations are used). As most of the current housing stock is attached or semi-detached, the R4 district is being proposed and 99 percent of the residences will now conform to the allowable FAR.

## **3. The proposed zoning will better match the zoning district to current use:**

#### *Western Richmond Hill*

- To better fit the current uses found in the area, the single-block M1-1 district south of Forest Park and west of 101st Street would be changed to an R6A district. All of the buildings on this block would become conforming. The R6A is a contextual district with an FAR of 3.0 and a maximum building height of 70 feet. Also, the existing C8-1 district on Jamaica Avenue west of 102nd Street would be expanded to include light industrial uses in the adjacent R3-1 district while excluding non-industrial uses.

#### *Eastern Richmond Hill*

- Approximately eight blocks located in an M1-1 district south of Jamaica Avenue would be changed to an R5

district since this area is developed mostly with attached homes, though there are detached, semi-detached, and multi-unit residences. Approximately 95 percent of the buildings in this area are currently residential and the proposed R5 district will bring them into conformance. The shopping center north of Hillside Avenue east of 126th Street that is presently zoned M1-1 would also be changed to an R5 district, but with a C1-3 commercial overlay to reflect its local retail character.

#### 4. Commercial and residential growth will be directed to areas that can most support it:

##### *Kew Gardens*

- Fourteen full and partial blocks, now zoned M1-1, C8-1, R5 and R4, located east of the LIRR tracks from Hillside to Jamaica Avenues, including portions of blocks between the Van Wyck Expressway and 134th Street and Jamaica Avenue and 89th Avenue, would be changed to an R6 district. The area is developed with both residential and commercial uses. The proposed R6 zoning district, with an FAR of 2.43, would recognize the diverse housing types in the area and would allow for higher density development near mass transit nodes. A proposed C2-3 commercial overlay on (name streets) would recognize the commercial character of those blocks and would allow new commercial uses to serve the area.

##### *Richmond Hill*

- The proposed zone for the Jamaica Avenue corridor from 102nd Street to 130th Street is an R6A zone with a C2-4 commercial overlay. The proposed R6A District would increase allowable FAR to 3.0 in all areas and have a maximum height of 70 feet for all buildings. The R6A zoning along with the commercial overlay, would encourage new, higher density residential developments and mixed-use buildings along Jamaica Avenue that would better reinforce its traditional development patterns than the existing R3-1, R5, and M1-1 districts with C1-2 and C2-2 commercial overlays.

Both the Jamaica Avenue corridor and the Metropolitan Avenue, Hillside Avenue and Kew Gardens Road area are well served by public transportation. The elevated J/Z subway runs along Jamaica Avenue and the E subway train has a stop at the Van Wyck Expressway and Jamaica Avenue. Numerous bus lines serve the area as well.

##### **Commercial Overlay Changes**

Most of the existing commercial overlays in the study area would be decreased in depth from 150 feet to 100 feet to keep commercial uses from encroaching on mid-block residential uses. Along Jamaica Avenue the commercial overlays will be changed from C1-2 and C2-2 overlays to C2-4 overlays. Commercial overlays on the Metropolitan Avenue and Lefferts Boulevard corridors would be changed from C1-2 to C1-3. The area immediately surrounding the Hillside Avenue, Metropolitan Avenue and Kew Gardens Road triangle will have a change in commercial overlays from a C2-2 to a C2-3. All of the commercial overlays reduce the parking requirement as these three portions of the study area are well served by the MTA subway system and the LIRR.



Proposed Commercial Overlay

 [View a larger image](#)

View the  [Zoning District Comparison Chart](#).

## Kew Gardens and Richmond Hill - **Approved!**

### Photos

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Old and new apartment buildings in proposed R7A district, Kew Gardens



A proposed zoning change from an M1-1 district to an R5 district south of Jamaica Avenue will bring existing residences into conformance



Downtown Richmond Hill



Typical detached residences in Richmond Hill



Typical R2 development at 85th Avenue and 116th Street



Proposed R4A district at 84th Avenue and 122nd Street



Existing M1-1 district and proposed R5 district at 123rd Street and 89th Avenue



Detached buildings in proposed R3X district at 105th Street and 86th Avenue



Condominiums in existing M1-1 district and proposed R6A district, 101st Street and Park Lane South



Kew Gardens LIRR stop, proposed R4-1 district



Jamaica Avenue between 104th and 105th Streets, proposed R6A district with C2-4 commercial overlay



Proposed R7A district on Lefferts Boulevard between 84th Avenue and Metropolitan Avenue

## Related Notes

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-  Items accompanied by this symbol require the [free Adobe Acrobat Reader](#).
- Brief explanations of terms in *green italics* can be viewed by [visiting glossary page](#). Words and phrases followed by an asterisk (\*) are defined terms in the Zoning Resolution, primarily in Section 12-10. Consult the Zoning Resolution for the official and legally binding definitions of these words and phrases.