



Union - Utopia Rezoning - **Approved!**

Overview

The Department of City Planning proposes to rezone 83 blocks in the central Queens neighborhoods of Fresh Meadows, Utopia Estates and West Cunningham Park in Community District 8. The entire area would be rezoned from R2 to R2A to preserve the community's built character of low-rise detached homes. The current R2 zoning has floor area allowances and building envelope controls that permit new buildings to be taller and larger than neighboring homes. This mismatch between existing zoning and the built form of the neighborhood creates an incentive to replace sound homes with out-of-scale buildings that could result in a substantial change in neighborhood character.



Existing neighborhood character on 196th Street



Out of character development on 196th Place



New construction on 184th Street



Background

The Union – Utopia rezoning area comprises 76 full blocks and seven partial blocks. It is generally bounded by 64th Avenue to the north, 196th Place to the east, Union Turnpike and Avon Road to the south, and Utopia Parkway to the west. This area is adjacent to Fresh Meadows, a large residential development that is zoned R4 and within a Special Planned Community District. The rezoning area also abuts R1-2, R2, R3-2 and R4 districts.

The Long Island Expressway is located just north of the rezoning area, the Grand Central Parkway just to the south, and the Clearview Expressway a few blocks east of the rezoning area. Although the rezoning area is served by eight bus routes, the closest subway station is the Jamaica 179th Street stop at Hillside Avenue on the F train line, which is approximately one mile away. St John's University is located directly to the southwest of the rezoning area. Cunningham Park, a 358-acre park is located immediately to the east of the rezoning area. This large open space contains tennis, baseball, picnic areas, playgrounds, and a concert oval.

The rezoning area is developed primarily with single-family detached residences, including one- to two-story ranch houses and cape cod style houses. Most have pitched roofs, are no more than 28 feet high and are consistently set back 20 feet from the street line.

Public Review

On December 19th, 2005, the Department of City Planning certified the [Uniform Land Use Review Procedure](#) (ULURP) application for the Union-Utopia Rezoning to begin the formal public review process.

Community Board 8 held a public hearing in response to the proposal on January 10th, 2006 and recommended approval on January 11th, 2006. The Queens Borough President recommended approval of the application on January 17th, 2006.

The City Planning Commission held its public hearing on February 22nd, 2006, and voted to approve the proposal on March 8, 2006. ([Read the CPC Report.](#))

On April 5th, 2006 the City Council adopted the zoning changes which are now in effect.

For more information on the Union-Utopia Rezoning, please contact the Queens Office of the Department of City Planning at (718) 286-3170.

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Existing and Proposed Zoning

Existing Zoning

The area is presently zoned R2, with C1-2 commercial overlays on 15 blockfronts along Union Turnpike.

The R2 district permits single-family detached homes with a maximum floor area ratio (FAR) of 0.5 on lots with an area of at least 3,800 square feet, and a minimum width of 40 feet. The R2 zoning does not set absolute limits on building height, and exempts the first floor of a house from floor area calculations under certain conditions, including the presence of a garage on the first floor. The height flexibility and floor area exemptions allow homes to nearly double their floor space, resulting in development considerably larger than typical homes in the vicinity.

Proposed Zoning

The proposed action would rezone the R2 district to a R2A district. In R2A zoning districts, residential development would be limited to one-family detached houses with a maximum FAR of 0.5, the same as in R2. The minimum lot area is 3,800 square feet and the minimum lot width is 40 feet, also the same as in R2 districts. A minimum 20-foot side yard would be required for development on corner lots. A front yard with a minimum depth of 15 feet must be at least as deep as an adjacent front yard. Floor area exemptions are limited to 300 square feet for an enclosed accessory parking structure. Maximum building height would be 35 feet, and maximum perimeter wall height 21 feet.

View a  [presentation on R2A zoning](#).



Existing Zoning Map

 [View a larger image](#).



Proposed Zoning Map

 [View a larger image](#).

Related Notes

-  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.