

# **Report to Queens Community Board 13 on City of Yes for Housing Opportunity**

**By Corey Bearak, chair, Queens Community Board 13 Land Use Subcommittee on City of Yes**

Last Thursday, the City Council Zoning Subcommittee and Land Use Committee in succession approved with some minor modifications the Mayor's City of Yes for Housing Opportunity zoning text amendment. As you know Community Board 13 resolved in June to unanimously reject this scheme because it would eviscerate community review and impose as of right increases in development and density city wide with no guarantees of affordability. We testified to our community board's opposition at the City Planning Commission and to City Council.

The Council made some changes:

- ▶ instead of removing any need for parking as part of most new development, it will require parking (with some changes) in most of our neighborhoods
  - ▶ it made the transit-oriented development 'zones' 1/4 mile instead of 1/2 mile of transit.
  - ▶ while it still allows for ADUs on all one and two-family zones, it limits certain types of ADUs in flood zones and in specific one and two-family zones – (R1-2A/R2A/R3A).
  - ▶ it removes a parking requirement for houses of worships in R1/R2 district; this is something that many of us were instrumental in getting under the Community Facilities Zoning Reform 15 years ago.
  - ▶ it still allows multi-family development is low density nabes on corner lots and wide streets.
  - ▶ further revisions actually allow more density on zoning lots by relaxing existing limits to side yards and FAR and height.
  - ▶ the town center zoning was changed for the worse, to allow the highest density and heights in the greater transit zones (which correspond to the Transit Oriented Development zones).
- And more...

So contrary to the Council's statement that only 80,000 units would be likely under its minimal changes, I believe that the actual number well exceeds the 109,000 that City Planning suggested. So do not let anyone characterize the City Council changes to City of Yes as "Substantial.

City Hall and the Council Speaker also agreed on \$5 billion in various infrastructure, housing affordability and staffing. \$1 billion of the \$5 billion is promised by Gov Hochul over four years so that funding depends on future state budget deals and perhaps the Gov.'s re-election. The remaining \$4 billion is subject to approvals over successive City Budgets. So the funding promised is not a secure as a typical Community Benefits Agreement approved pursuant to a ULURP proceeding. It can just be placed into the Ten-Year Budget process as priorities – with no funding guaranteed at the end.

The revised zoning scheme goes to the City Council AFTER City Planning determines whether the minimal changes made at the Council Zoning Subcommittee and approved by its Land Use Committee require a new environmental review. Expect City Planning to determine no need exists for any further environmental review (doing so would delay the Mayor's proposed scheme). That would pave the way for the Council to vote the amended City of Yes up or down. If the Council votes yes (only 26 votes needed), City of Yes becomes the Zoning law Citywide; if the Council votes no, the scheme is DOA (dead on arrival). In that case, City Hall would then need to restart the process to try to implement City of Yes.

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