



Queens Civic Congress

www.qcc.nyc

P.O. Box 670706 Flushing, NY 11367

OVER 100 QUEENS CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS TOGETHER SERVING THE INTERESTS OF THEIR COMMUNITIES

The civic community of Queens County finds that the protection and advancement of the quality in life of Queens requires greater cooperation and dialogue among its members in order to effectively influence public policy and enhance our neighborhoods. Therefore, we freely join hands to work together as the Queens Civic Congress to command greater attention from public officials and the private sector as to the concerns of the civic movement in Queens and coordinate the energies and strategies of civic activists on a boroughwide level.

The Queens Civic Congress strives to address itself to the full spectrum of issues, developments and conditions on all matters which may affect our neighborhoods, the Borough and County of Queens, and New York City. It then develops common policies and positions and to provide a forum for the civic associations and neighborhood organizations to inform and address themselves to the full spectrum of issues and to advocate for the advancement of the welfare and interests of Queens' neighborhoods.

Where we stand – 2022

TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES

Subways

We suggest dividing E and F service equally to 179th Street and Archer Avenue to afford better access to both 6th and 8th Avenues without riders changing trains. We urge expediting signal upgrades to allow more trains on the #7 line. MTA must expedite accessibility provisions at all subway stations.

Bus Transportation

Bus service is the critical source of non-automobile transport in Queens. The 2022 version of the re-imagined bus map is an improvement over the one in 2019. We urge full engagement of the community before finalizing. We oppose any route changes that would result in a net loss of bus service on any existing local or express route corridors. We are particularly concerned about proposed bus stop spacing that could alienate many older and infirm riders.

Bike lanes

Bike lanes have not been popular in Queens. They are mostly unused, take up valuable vehicular space in streets, reduce parking for stores where the bike racks are placed, and mixing bicycles with moving cars and trucks has proved dangerous. Yet there is a constituency that supports bike lanes. QCC demands that no bike lanes be built without the expressed approval of the affected Community Board and that existing bike lanes be revisited in terms of Community Board approval. Bike lanes not supported by the Community Board must be removed. Police are requested to enforce traffic laws on bike users.

AirTrain to LaGuardia

Any AirTrain routing must involve the community and minimize impact on residential neighborhoods. The concept is good. The devil is in the details.

Long Island Rail Road

The LIRR serves many communities beyond reach of subways. We request more accessibility for stations that lack ADA compliance. We request lower fares for inter- and intra-borough trips. We support a study of using the Bay Ridge freight line for passenger service into Queens. We urge accelerating the schedule of opening a LIRR station at Elmhurst.

Automobile transportation

For Queens' residents, reliance on automobiles, either personally driven or as taxi/car services, remains important in a borough underserved by subways and for those for whom buses and bikes are not an option. The policies of City government of slowing the speed limits, creating dedicated bus lanes, and removing parking to install bike racks have made auto driving difficult and frustrating. QCC urges more opportunity for input and review by the communities affected by policy changes impacting the movement of cars.

Rockaway Peninsula

Due to the remoteness of the Rockaway Peninsula, the City must devise improved access to shorten commutes and ease access for leisure visitors.

Congestion Pricing

Although already approved, we urge a delay for five years in implementation while the economy of the City struggles to recover from the Pandemic lockdown.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Civic engagement is considered to be an important foundation for community participation in all aspects of living in New York City, as in any other place in the USA. The various forms of civic engagement include: Civic associations, neighborhood associations, precinct councils, PTAs, community boards, block associations, school boards, education, voting, engagement of youth at home and in school, holding and participating in town hall meetings. The purpose of such forms of engagement is to advance the interests of neighborhoods as well as to object to adverse impacts of proposed legislation.

Queens Civic Congress proposes active civic engagement at all levels to enhance participation in legislative and community affairs. The following proposals include public and private partnerships for: history and civics to be taught in schools to foster understanding and participation; youth programs in civics fora, discussions, debates, essay competition; use of social, mainstream and ethnic media in various languages to promote civic engagement; newsletters and mailings to be timely and effective; need for regular, timely public services related to residents' needs and concerns, and relevant contact information; partnering with academic institutions, trusted religious groups and medical facilities, and to teach and promote civic engagement and volunteerism.

LAND USE AND ZONING

Queens' residents deserve land use planning that responds to the needs of our neighborhoods, protecting scale and substance where appropriate and carefully increasing density when substantial infrastructure upgrades have been completed.

In the previous administration, neighborhood-wide contextual rezonings came to a crashing halt, leaving many neighborhoods vulnerable to development pressures. QCC demands that they restart immediately with significant local input. More growth in Queens must not come at the cost of eliminating one-family/lower-density zoning or impacting quality of life in our neighborhoods.

Historic Preservation

With few exceptions, the preservation of neighborhoods and individual buildings through landmarking and historic districts has been an abject failure for Queens since the Landmarks Preservation Commission was established 57 years ago.

Not only should more neighborhoods and individual buildings be landmarked, but it is also time for a more rational approach to be adopted in Queens due to the blatant bias against our borough by the LPC. In order to preserve the basic fabric of our built environment, QCC proposes new legislation to create "design districts" which, while not necessarily as rigid as landmarking, would give communities much more say in how their areas would look and evolve over time.

Housing and Buildings

Queens is in an increasing crisis of both affordability and safety, made worse by a complete lack of enforcement of thousands of illegal conversions. This has resulted in lower quality of life, "black market" rents and often dangerous living conditions.

The continued push to give blanket amnesty to illegal conversions by some elected officials is counterproductive, *rewarding bad actors while punishing responsible property owners*. QCC demands immediate enforcement actions.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Over the past few decades, community facilities, including schools, day care centers, health care and hospital buildings and other essentially commercial ventures have been negatively impacting areas of Queens. Increased bulk allowances/density "as-of-right" have created major changes to neighborhoods, with little redress from small property owners.

QCC calls on the City Planning Commission to reconsider the Zoning Resolution's definition of many religious, medical, educational and professional operations as "community facilities," allowing them to develop "as-of-right" in communities without regard to local zoning or interest of residents in those areas. Large-scale community facilities must be subject to the same public review as any other major development.

PUBLIC SAFETY

We are suffering from an unacceptable level of crime in New York City. Therefore, the Queens Civic Congress makes recommendations that we believe will significantly improve public safety.

All crimes must be subject to remand. Anyone who is arrested for a new crime while awaiting trial should be remanded.

Bail must be reformed so that it is only used for its original intent, i.e., to help ensure that the charged individual reports back to court, and that all charges should be subject to an evaluation of the flight risk.

The legislation must contain an ability for the judge to hold an individual on remand, and he or she will not be released until the judge issues a release order. The release order must be the outcome of a formal hearing based on new evidence or formal appeal. It should be contained within a written legal judgement explaining why the individual who is to be released is no longer considered a danger to the public safety.

The legislation must establish guidelines to enable the judge to use appropriate indicators to order remand and must be based on the risk to public safety based on the detainee's prior arrests, or convictions record. Failure to follow the guidelines must automatically result in a review by a supervising judge.

The court system must institute reforms to make the proceedings more efficient. This should include adopting steps that were established during the Covid-19 crisis including, but not limited to, the use of virtual appearances. If this requires a Constitutional Amendment(s), we support putting such amendment to the voters as soon as possible.

While priorities may need to be made, the goal should be that all laws are enforced.

It has been widely established that in excess of 40% of those people in detention are suffering from mental and/or emotional illness.

Society must take steps to treat these individuals consistent with existing medical and socially responsible practices to avoid criminal behavior.

The NYPD must be fully funded to ensure sufficient resources to protect the citizens of the city in a robust, fair, and proactive manner.

NYPD must provide competitive wages and benefits that are consistent and competitive with large police departments in the Tri-State Region. The salary and benefit package must be in the top ten percent.

After any significant reform, data should be maintained to monitor effectiveness and identify any unintended consequences.

NYC HOMELESS PROBLEM

Research shows that the primary cause of homelessness, particularly among families, is lack of affordable housing. Surveys of homeless families have identified the following major immediate, triggering causes of homelessness: eviction; doubled-up or severely overcrowded housing; domestic violence; job loss; and hazardous housing conditions. Research also shows that, compared to homeless families, homeless single adults have much higher rates of serious mental illness, addiction disorders, and other severe health problems". *Source: Coalition for the Homeless*

Queens Civic Congress urges NYC/NYS to expeditiously address this issue with focus on the underlying causes of homelessness while providing urgently needed shelter and medical care, as well as schooling of affected children.

EDUCATION

All children at all levels of schooling deserve an excellent education based on a comprehensive curriculum conducted by outstanding educators and support staff. The goal should be to produce students who can function in a 21st century world, not only acquiring the basic skills, but also exposed to all of the other subjects normally studied in school.

The objective for student learning should not be for training to take tests, but to attain a well-rounded education, foster a love of life-long learning, and encourage the need for community service. To foster respect, students should learn about various cultures from across the country and the world.

The needs of students with learning, physical, and emotional disabilities, as well as the needs of gifted students, must be fulfilled with optimal resources.

No child should be prevented from attending an appropriately zoned school in his/her neighborhood if that child and his/her parent(s) desire that choice.

Co-location of two or more schools in the same building may cause difficulties in sharing space and competing for funding.

There should be equity in funding for programs and staff in all schools, so that all students can expect an excellent educational experience.

Schools should offer programs for gifted and talented students, as well as after-school programs for students wishing to participate.

For admittance to specialized high schools, a test such as the SHSAT should be given to help determine those students who may be successful in those schools with unique programs. Other factors should also be considered for admission, including unique programs. Other factors should also be considered for admission, including student academic success and motivation, and/or teacher recommendations.

Opportunities for vocational training must be available to students who wish to pursue such studies.

The placement of new schools in local communities must be a transparent process. Residents must be notified before final decisions are made by the School Construction Authority (SCA) and discussion meetings should be held at local venues such as CEC, Community Board, and civic association meetings where plans for siting new buildings would be presented to the public for their review and input. Written comments from the public regarding school locations should also be considered by the SCA.

Young people are our future. Pursue ways to educate, motivate and challenge the students who attend our schools so that they can become better educated leaders of tomorrow.

REAL ESTATE TAX EQUITY

NYC Property Tax Reform should address disparities in property tax assessments without shifting the cost of the tax reform onto 1-3 family properties and must include NYC into the NYS annual property tax cap of 2% or the rate of inflation whichever is less as in effect statewide. Increases in property taxes that exceed inflation or 2% will accelerate the flight of NYC middle class taxpayers, reduce property values, and replace owner occupied housing with absentee investor- based housing, undermining the viability of our neighborhoods and our tax base.

Queens co-ops and condos represent the last bastion of affordable, middle-income, working-class housing in NYC and must not be burdened by runaway property taxes and unfunded mandates.

CITY COUNCIL REDISTRICTING

In 2012, QCC played a major role in the final determination of Council District boundaries.

QCC must play a similar role along with community input in the upcoming Redistricting Commission process to ensure that neighborhoods remain as intact as possible.

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Subject to change as become necessary.

Would you like more information?

Simply call us at **1-347-722-1872**

or complete and mail this form to:

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