

## **Sunnyside Gardens zoning update, June 5**

**Where do we stand in our hope for the zoning protection that Sunnyside Gardens deserves?**

by Herb Reynolds, Sunnyside Gardens

For last Tuesday's (June 2, 2009) Zoning Subcommittee hearing on City Planning's proposed zoning revision for Sunnyside Gardens, messages opposing the revision came from well over 50 neighbors, plus our Sunnyside Gardens Preservation Alliance (SGPA), Barry Lewis, the Historic Districts Council, the Queens AIA, the Queensborough Preservation Council, the [Queens Civic Congress](#) (over 110 neighborhood associations throughout the borough), the Society for the Architecture of the City, the former head of the New-York Historical Society, and others.

As the hearing dragged on, we lost some supporters who wanted to testify in person but had to return to their jobs, but still there were three times more of us speaking against the proposed revision than the four who testified on the side of City Planning.

The SGPA has mailed Speaker Quinn a letter of explanation, and today (June 5) we are delivering to her our hundreds of petitions as well as printed copies of all the e-mails sent to Councilman Gioia that were CC'd to the SGPA.

(Our petition for a strong zoning text reads, "In the Sunnyside Gardens PC district, there shall be no curb cuts, no driveways, and no parking in yards; no sheds or carports; no fixed fencing or other obstruction or subdivision to the shared walkways or lanes or center courts; no enlargements beyond the footprint of the buildings; and no trees of a 10-inch caliper or greater may be removed except by permit from the LPC." Regrettably, City Planning is only offering us a ban on most curb cuts-- and they can do much better than that.)

We expect a vote by the City Council this coming Tuesday, so time is growing short for us to speak out and say we need much stronger zoning than City Planning is offering us.

\* The most important contribution you can make is to send a message to Speaker Quinn, by going to <http://council.nyc.gov/d3/html/members/home.shtml>

then clicking on "Contact Speaker Quinn" and filling in the form as a "Land Use" matter. Ask Speaker Quinn to Please support Sunnyside Gardens by urging the City Council to vote NO to the City Planning zoning revision. Or leave her a quick message in your own words.

\* More e-mails to Councilman Gioia are in order, even if you already sent one: [gioia@council.nyc.ny.us](mailto:gioia@council.nyc.ny.us) and CC this to [SunnysideGardens@verizon.net](mailto:SunnysideGardens@verizon.net)

In haste, but with great appreciation for your devotion to this neighborhood, I'll add the HDC's summary below (see next page).

Herb, for the  
Sunnyside Gardens Preservation Alliance

[From Historic Districts Council] **Sunnyside Gardens To Be Upzoned?**

On Tuesday, the City Council Zoning and Franchises Subcommittee deliberated on the [proposed text changes to the Sunnyside Gardens Special Planned Community Preservation District](#). Approximately 16 people spoke on the item, a dozen opposed and four in favor. The Council members questioned Landmarks Commission staff extensively about the proposal and how it would affect the agency's regulation of the historic district, but – at the request of local CM Eric Gioia – laid over any decision until June 10th in order for the council member to gather more information.

As we [wrote last week](#), the proposed zoning change essentially invalidates the PC District and is, in our view, a defacto up-zoning. Such a change, if approved, will only open the door to more proposals for potentially damaging alterations to the historic district, making the LPC's work in regulating the district that much more difficult. One of the key elements of Sunnyside Gardens' historic significance is its plan – the dedicated open space, the small lot coverage, the designed gardens and the like. HDC believes strongly that planning has an important role to play as a mechanism in preserving this planned community. We are very disappointed by the lack of constructive dialogue with the city agencies about how to best implement preserving this plan and feel that the deactivation of the enforcement power of the PC district is not the right move at this time. Ideally, City Planning and the Landmarks Preservation Commission would collaborate with community stakeholders on how to best and most effectively preserve the special character of the Sunnyside Gardens Historic District, but that is going to take time and real discussion. At this juncture, we believe that the City Council should either table this proposed change for the time being in order to work with the agencies and the community to improve it or, if that is not possible, reject it altogether and tell the agencies to go back to the community and come up with a new proposal, one that regulates landscaping, reduces the FAR and prohibits sheds (just like the current proposal prohibits curb cuts).

Even if you already wrote in, please take a moment and send a note to CM Eric Gioia and tell him that “this plan is wrong for Sunnyside Gardens. Please listen to the community and come up with a real proposal that preserves the special planned character of Sunnyside Gardens”.

E-mails should be sent to CM Eric Gioia [gioia@council.nyc.ny.us](mailto:gioia@council.nyc.ny.us), Zoning Chair CM Tony Avella [avella@council.nyc.ny.us](mailto:avella@council.nyc.ny.us), Speaker Christine Quinn (enter a message into the form: <http://council.nyc.gov/d3/html/members/home.shtml>) with a CC to [SunnysideGardens@verizon.net](mailto:SunnysideGardens@verizon.net) and [hdc@hdc.org](mailto:hdc@hdc.org).