

## *Queens Ledger*

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# **In Our Opinion... The Evolution of Zoning: Has It Stopped?**

Last week in front of Queens Borough Hall there were complaints about zoning laws that have affected neighborhoods and communities throughout Queens. Many of the residents, community leaders and people on hand for the rally were frustrated. They felt the city and its developers trampled over their space while converting many of their quiet residences into business centers.

The Queens Civic Congress fronted by President Corey Bearak and rally coordinator, Henry Euler, blamed the overwhelming amount of developers that often avoid taking community civics and members into consideration before turning residential areas into the city's hands.

One person we spoke revealed this to be the case. The elderly gentleman told us that the government stopped paying attention to the people who know "what's really going on." Said person (who didn't want his name revealed) went along to say he has lived in his respected Queens neighborhood for 50 years and has not been able to gain the respect he needs to enforce zoning changes.

"It's not right," is how he described the situation.

During the rally, vice president of the QCC, Harbachan Singh, brought up the history of zoning throughout New York. The groundbreaking Zoning Resolution of 1916 in particular is what he shed light on. "Thank our forefathers for coming up with this," he said.

This legislation established height and setback controls and designated residential districts that excluded what were seen as incompatible uses. It created soaring towers that epitomized the city's business districts and established the familiar context of three- to six-story residential buildings found in much of the city.

The new ordinance became a model for urban communities throughout American as other cities found that New York's problems of zoning were not unique. Mainly it separated the city for the less urban areas on the outskirts. These implemented ideals stayed in effect for a while.

It was only in 1961 that a new Zoning Resolution was set. It was more in-depth - coordinating use and bulk regulations, incorporated parking requirements and emphasized the creation of open space.

It also introduced incentive zoning by adding a bonus of extra floor space to encourage developers of office buildings and apartment towers to incorporate public plazas into their projects. Throughout New York, the 1961 zoning act dramatically reduced achievable housing densities, largely at the edges of the city.

According to the New York City Department of City Planning website: "Time passes, land uses change and zoning policy accommodates, anticipates and guides those changes. In a certain sense, zoning is never final; it is renewed constantly in response to new ideas- and to new challenges."

Many have raised such new "challenges." Now it is time for the city's response. Isn't it about time a new zoning act gets passed to add nuances to the ever-changing communities throughout the city?