

Don't Let them Undo Sunnyside Gardens

Queens Civic Congress joins Historic Districts Council (HDC) in urging support for Sunnyside Gardens. Now, what one city agency – Landmarks Preservation Commission – helped protect, another – the Department of City Planning/ City Planning Commission – seeks to undo by permitting *as-of-right* changes not otherwise permitted currently. Thus we urge everyone join Sunnyside Gardens, Queens Civic Congress and Historic Districts Council at the City Council (Zoning Subcommittee) Public Hearing (chaired by Council Member Tony Avella) on this matter, 9:30 a.m., Tuesday, June 2, in the Council Chamber on the second floor at City Hall. (Closest subways are the 4-5-6 to Brooklyn Bridge/City Hall, or the R-W to City Hall. Arrive early and tell the security guard you're coming to a public hearing.) Below is the relevant section of an e-bulletin sent today (Friday, May 29, 2009) by HDC:

Zoning Change Threatens Preservation of the Sunnyside Gardens Historic District

Part of the reason that Sunnyside Gardens residents worked so hard to become a designated historic district was because the strong protections granted by the Planned Community (PC) zoning law were not being enforced by the Department of Buildings. The LPC seemed the perfect agency to enforce the PC zoning, which was intended to protect the scale and historic open spaces of the neighborhood. However, now the Department of City Planning has proposed a revised zoning that emasculates the PC zoning and the LPC has not begun to address district-specific regulations that might continue the protections City Planning proposes to remove. Really. The current PC zoning disallows driveways, curb cuts, paving front yards, fences and barriers in common gardens or across common walkways, building enlargements or additions, garages or carports, sheds, porches, decks and tree removal. See http://www.sunnysidegardens.us/pdf/DCPlan_FactSheet.pdf for details. The current rezoning proposal allows all these things *as-of-right* (see http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/sunnyside_gardens/index.shtml for details), relying on the LPC's existing rules and regulations to guide development within the planned community. At this point, the City Planning Commission has passed the proposal and it is up to the City Council to deny it. Unfortunately, the local Council member Eric Gioia, who was in favor of the landmark designation, has not pledged his full support in defeating this damaging zoning change. Especially since CM Gioia has announced he is running for citywide office as a candidate for Public Advocate, this is an instance where every voice counts and every voice will be heard. **The City Council will be deliberating on this plan at City Hall on Tuesday.**

Please take a moment to contact CM Gioia and say "Vote No to zoning change for Sunnyside Gardens."

E-mails should be sent to CM Eric Gioia gioia@council.nyc.ny.us, Zoning Chair CM Tony Avella 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 and hdc@hdc.org.