



Justice For All Coalition

(United we Stand for LIC and Astoria)



April 6, 2018

Queens Borough President Melinda Katz
120-55 Queens Boulevard
Kew Gardens, NY 11424

RE: 82nd Street Spot Rezoning in Elmhurst Threatens Residents, Small Businesses and Transit

Dear Ms. Katz,

The Justice For All Coalition is a community-based group operating in Long Island City and Astoria, with a particular base in the NYCHA houses along the Queens waterfront. In our part of Queens, we are facing massive over-development and rezonings, and are working to mitigate displacement and to insure that the needs of the community are taken into account. Given this, we are deeply sympathetic to the demands of the communities of Elmhurst, Jackson Heights, and Corona to defend their residents and small businesses against displacement, and we call on you to take an **unequivocal stand against the proposed spot rezoning at 40-31 82nd Street in Elmhurst**. These are the key reasons we are urging you to join us:

- **The proposed housing is too expensive for our community.** Developers are seeking to rezone the site to allow for greater height (from R6 to R7X), which would allow them to build nearly twice as many market-rate units, reaping enormous profits. The handful of “permanently affordable” units in the complex required to be built under the city’s Mandatory Inclusionary Housing policy would hardly be affordable to existing residents. Developers are proposing to price the so-called “affordable units” at 80% of area median income—that is \$68,700 for a family of three—yet median income for a family of three in CB 4 is only \$44,865. This sets an alarming precedent for future developers with their eyes on Elmhurst and Jackson Heights.
- **Threat to small businesses.** The proposed ground floor commercial space would be anchored by a Target. Already, Target has announced plans to sell products that directly compete with existing small businesses (such as pre-made food, baby supplies, and sporting goods) and has written bans into its lease, prohibiting other small businesses from sharing space with them. There are already two Targets a short train ride away. A new business-killing Target is not needed in Elmhurst!
- **Overburdened transit system and car traffic.** By the developers’ own approximations, the mall would add roughly 1,500 extra pedestrian trips to the area daily, as well as increased car

- traffic. This will not only add further strain to our overburdened transit system for businesses and residents working and living in the neighborhood but could potentially be life threatening for all who depend on quick access to Elmhurst Hospital, one of the only Level One trauma centers in the city, which is only one block away from the proposed site.

In neighborhood after neighborhood in our city, skyrocketing rents are pushing out poor and middle class people, and the effects are most felt by communities of color. We are losing the cultural diversity of all of our communities, as people are forced to move, double up in apartments and even to become homeless. We are counting on you, as an elected official, to take a strong stand against this kind of thoughtless, profit-motivated development, and to preserve the diversity of our beloved borough of Queens.

We urge you to stand with the Queens community, including Community Board 4, and send a firm “no” recommendation to the City Planning Commission and Council Member Moya, with a recommendation to consider an alternate zoning that protects our small businesses, the character of our neighborhood and creates truly affordable and accessible housing or community space.

Sincerely,

The Justice For All Coalition