

BY JOHN TOSCANO

Caught in the same trap as many Queens areas where population increases have met limited affordable housing availability, Flushing area lawmakers and community leaders have joined in an effort to find workable solutions.

One area of interest that has emerged is an enclave of warehouses that contain manufacturing businesses and is bounded by the Van Wyck Expressway and College Point Boulevard.

However, housing advocates would face opposition in trying to oust the current tenants, and would then also have to win zoning changes to create the possibility of building residences there.

One other solution put forward revolves around changing the present manufacturing zone to a mixed-use zone.

Recently state Senator Toby Stavisky, Assemblymember Ellen Young and City Councilmember John Liu (all D-Flushing) met with leaders of community groups at the intersection of Fuller Street near Sanford and Maple Avenues near the manufacturing enclave to discuss the problem and to seek planning options.

Also discussed, they said, was the scope of a study being conducted to assess the viability of transforming under-utilized areas to increase the availability of affordable housing.

Liu said in a statement, "Over the past decade, Flushing has experienced unprecedented growth. Unfortunately many working families can no longer afford to stay and live in Flushing. If we are to preserve the economic, social and ethnic diversity that is Flushing, both the public and private sectors must work

Push For Affordable Housing



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together to look for smart ways to address the growing affordability gap."

Stavisky and Young made similar comments, Stavisky saying there must be creative ways found to ensure that working families can stay and live in Flushing; while Young stated, "We must creatively plan for the future of Flushing, for new businesses, new residents, and new opportunities by looking for bold, innovative solutions to the challenge of housing a broad range of New Yorkers."

Liu said there were already existing rezoning pressures from property owners and the business community. "If there is going to be a transformation in this area, there must be a strong component of affordable housing," he said.

In a separate report on these issues in the same area, Councilmember Tony Avella, chair of the council Zoning and Franchises Committee, said replacing the existing manufacturing zoning with affordable housing would create problems because the manufacturing base is important to the city's economy.

Liu responded that there are precedents for developing plans that mix housing and light industry.

Also taking part in the discussions with the Flushing lawmakers were Christopher Kui, executive director of Asian Americans for Equality, and Ella Gordon, a Flushing resident and coordinator of the District Council 37 Flushing Association.

Kui said, "Building and preserving affordable housing must be on everyone's agenda."

Gordon pledged to work to transform the underutilized blocks into thriving neighborhoods.

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