



Chairperson, Martha Taylor

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Community Board 8

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District Manager, Marie Adam-Ovide

Zoning Committee Meeting

Fresh Meadows Development Proposal

DATE: May 22, 2025

Committee Members Present: Hersh Parekh, Zoning Committee Chair, Edward Chung, Maria DeInnocentiis, Armando Echeverry, Doretha McFadden, and David Mordukhaev.

Committee Members Absent: Kenneth Cohen, II, Howard A. Fried, Mohammed Islam "Delwar", Jesse Rosenbaum, Seymour Schwartz and Douglas Sherman.

Other Board Members Present: Martha Taylor, Tamara Osherov, Bhitihara Fulton, James Gallagher, Alan Ong, Amy Tse, and Caitlin Marziliano.

Others in attendance: Rachel Scall, Aaron Polinsky, Sergey Rybak, Maura Avington, Rose Christ, Daniel Kaplan, DM Marie Adam-Ovide, and CB8 Staff Member, Soleil Griffin.

Zoning Committee Chairperson Hersh Parekh called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

The Zoning Chairperson introduced himself.

Hersh Parekh – We are here for an informational presentation about a proposal related to the Fresh Meadows Development. Before we get started, just a show of hands of who here lives within that community (majority of the public raised their hands). Great, you are exactly who we wanted to make sure attend the presentation. There are a couple of points to make:

- ***This is an informational presentation.***
- ***There is no action that the Community Board has to take tonight.***
- ***The Zoning Committee will not be voting on anything.***
- ***The project has not begun the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) phase.***

The purpose of tonight is to ensure that the community board and the community that lives in the development has the opportunity to see what the proposal is, ask questions. This will help the developers team understand what it is you are looking for, what it is you are not looking for, and to share that feedback.

Zoning Chairperson Parekh gave a shout out to District Manager Marie Adam-Ovide and CB8 Staffer Soleil Griffin for putting the meeting together. He then turned it over to the developers.

Rachel Scall, Land Use and Zoning Attorney for Cozen O'Connor

This is a proposal. We have not submitted an application to anyone. We are coming to the community early and are not asking anyone to take any action tonight. Fresh Meadows was made up of farmland until 1921. It then became the Fresh Meadows Country Club. In 1946 it was purchased by New York Life Insurance Company that transformed it into what we see today. As a planned community, Fresh Meadows includes a commercial segment along the Horace Harding Expressway and the LIE. Queens Fresh Meadows LLC owns and controls only the residential portion of the community.

The community expressed concerns about Fresh Meadows. They include:

- Lack of community gathering space
- Lack of amenities, indoor recreation opportunities
- Residences not accessible to wheelchairs and difficult for elderly
- Stormwater management
- Need more kid & family focused spaces
- Need upgrades to infrastructure
- Resources and opportunities for aging in place

With each of these concerns, we tried to identify opportunities to make them better. They include:

- Enhance green space
- Create recreational / community space
- New / expanded childcare facility
- New parking structures
- Traffic management enhancements
- Stormwater resiliency
- Modern, high-quality residences
- Improved waste management

Fresh Meadows has nearly 3,300 units across 125 acres. The area is protected by a Special Zoning District also known as the Special Plan Community Preservation District. This means we can not touch any of the buildings, landscape, and topography without approvals. Anything we do will need to be reviewed by the Community Board, Borough President, approved by the City Planning Commission, and City Council. That is the ULURP process. If the plans get approved by the City Council, we are bound to build in accordance to the plans. We would not be able to make changes. If we wanted to make changes, we would have to do the whole process over again.

Daniel Kaplan, Senior Partner at FXCollaborative

The design goals are intended to improve the tenant's living experience through the following:

- Enhance green landscape
- Add parking
- Improve waste management
- Create community amenities / focal point
- Use a variety of building heights and forms
- Enable a phased development
- Relate new buildings to existing: traditional materials

One 188th Street, there is an opportunity to redevelop the parking garage to add more parking and add housing. The old bridge line could be enhanced from a green space to an open space or park like space point of view. The existing waste transfer station next to the strip mall would be a great opportunity to improve the operations there and screen it to add parking. On Peck Avenue, there is a lot of greenery and a school across the street which would be great to create potential developments.

The vast majority of the area is going to be untouched. Only five percent of the area would be developed. There are four areas that we are proposing in our initial design. For Phase 1, we will focus on 188th Street and Ridge Enhancements. We will be proposing four buildings, and the taller building will be where the other taller buildings are located. The existing daycare center will remain in operation.

There will be an outdoor pool and community center at 69th Avenue and 188th Street. The community center would be about 45,000 square feet. This is the scale of a new YMCA. The types of programming will be in collaboration with the community. It could have basketball, craft rooms, meeting rooms, etc. The outdoor pool would be in use during the summer months, which would be accessible through the

upper level of the community center. The improved green space would be in the middle of the entire community. It would have equal access all around it and be accessible to everyone who lives in the community. This would create an enhanced quality of life.

Our proposal for 188th Street looking North would be to widen the sidewalk, create more green spaces and create outer courts. The buildings would set back in the middle and there would be a garden facing the street. The buildings would step down and the ground floor could have community-oriented retail or community facility services. Further north on 188th Street is the service yard where the trash is gathered and exposed. The proposal is to screen the location by putting the garbage inside a new garage with compactors. It will be safer than it is now.

Phase 2 of the proposal looks at enhancements to the sanitation lot. The area would be screened and enclosed so people would not see it. This area has a real need for more parking, so we could construct a new parking garage. There are a series of townhouses. We would rebuild those and reconstruct them with a garage and waste transfer station behind it going east on 67th Avenue.

Phase third of the proposal looks at enhancements to Oak Grove. We are proposing two buildings in the east and west. The east and the west side would have an eight-story building maximum. For the west side, ground floor would be open for community use.

Finally, the Fourth Phase of the proposal looks at enhancements to Peck Avenue. Along Peck Avenue is a wide street and green space. We could have four lower buildings and one building in the west that is further to have fifteen-stories.

In summary, our initial proposal would add 2,000 new residences, 19,000 square feet of ground floor for retail and services, 45,000 square feet for a new enclosed program space, 1,800 spaces for parking. Currently, 39% of units have dedicated parking. The proposal would allot for 58% of units that will have dedicated parking spaces. We are impacting five percent of the open space. Some of the benefits would include:

- New Recreational Space - bringing new services and jobs to Fresh Meadows.
- 2,000 NET New Mixed Income Housing Units - including market, senior and affordable.
- New Neighborhood Stores - Promote neighborhood and local retail.
- Enhanced Open Space - with new enhanced amenities and ecologically restorative open space.
- Enhanced Sustainability + Resiliency - Site resiliency enhancements and new waste transfer facility & low carbon infrastructure.
- New Community Wellness - expanded day care and new senior and mental health services.
- 1,800 NET New Parking Spaces - Increased parking to unit ratio. 58% of units will have dedicated parking spaces.

Rachel Scall, Land Use and Zoning Attorney for Cozen O'Connor

We were here on Monday and have not updated the presentation. We will most likely give the same presentation in June; however, we want to acknowledge that these are our ideas and not everyone agreed with all of them. What we heard on Monday from residents were the following:

- Density needs to be appropriate for the planned community
- More information is needed on traffic and safety plans for the project
- Parking needs must be better addressed
- Must work with the City to ensure there are enough schools / seats
- Any plan needs to account for seniors, those with disabilities and families with young children
- Moving costs for tenants who are relocated must be paid for and tenants must be offered a comparable unit without a rent increase
- Any new buildings should maintain the look and character of existing structures

To learn more about the Fresh Meadows proposal, you can visit freshmeadowsvision.com. For questions and feedback contact vision@queensfreshmeadows.com.

Zoning Chairperson Parekh thanked the presenters. He recognized the representatives of elected officials who attended (Council Member Linda Lee, Council Member Jim Gennaro, Senator John Liu's office).

Hersh Parekh – I counted a total of ninety-four units to be relocated. That would not be easy for people who have been living there for many years. What would happen to those tenants? What would happen if they needed to relocate? What would happen when the work is finished? What would be the relocation process?

Answer [Rachel Scall] – If relocation is part of the plan, before anyone's unit is touched, new units will be built. When it is time to take down an existing unit, the resident would have the choice to move to a refurbished existing unit or one of the new units. If they have a two-bedroom, then they would move to a two-bedroom or if they have a townhouse, then they would move to a townhouse. All of their expenses would be paid for the move. Renters of rent stabilized units will also be moved back to rent stabilized unit. Even if you weren't rent stabilized, your rent would not go up from the move.

Hersh Parekh – You mentioned a NET new 2,000 units that would be part of this proposal. In what type of structure would those units be in? Would they be in a high rise? Would they be in the smaller buildings that currently exist that make up the character of the community? What is the make up of those 2,000 units.

Answer [Daniel Kaplan] – The units are in a variety of heights from midrise buildings and two high rise buildings that would be next to the twenty-story building. We are not proposing new townhouses except for that row that is in front of the parking garage.

Hersh Parekh – This board voted down the City of Yes. There are two reasons why we turned it down. The first is the elimination of the parking mandate. The further east you go in the community district the more important a car is. There was also no mandate for affordable housing for the City of Yes. You stated that 2,000 units would be a mix of market rate, senior and affordable housing. Are you making any commitments of how many affordable units would be part of that mix? Secondly, you stated that 58% of units would have a dedicated parking spot, which means roughly 40% would not have a dedicated parking spot. Does that mean residents would have to find parking in the street? What would be the plan for those individuals?

Answer [Rachel Scall] – We are looking to bring on an affordable housing specialist. We want someone who understands the many different programs out there. We heard that there is a desire for affordable senior housing. We also want to make sure that there are more standard affordable housing units for any age brackets. We do not have firm numbers yet. That will come overtime working with you and the elected officials. There will be a percentage set aside and we will be required to do that. For parking, we are proposing that for the new units being built, 90% of those being built would have parking. Compared to what is there now, there will be an increase in the proportion of parking.

Zoning Chairperson Parekh then opened for questions from committee members.

David Mordukhaev – Are you working with the MTA to provide public transportation to the neighborhood? How are you expanding 188th Street?

Answer [Rachel Scall] – This is something we are looking at. There was a point where residents fought for 188th Street to be one lane due to safety issues. We are looking into having drop-off zones or turn lanes so that cars are not blocking traffic. We are also looking at signalization. We will be in touch with the MTA about our findings since we are doing a very detailed environmental study. We are not there yet because we want your input and do not want to study something that is going to be impossible. We are looking at additional bus service while keeping safety in mind, especially from the drag racing.

Maria DeInnocentiis – What are you doing for homeowners in the community to include our concerns?

Answer [Rachel Scall] – That is why we are here. We are years away from entering a ULURP and we know there is a lot of civic associations that we will be reaching out to.

Maria DeInnocentiis – When you move residents who are rent stabilized into another unit, how long does that rent stabilize hold for them? It is, as long as their current lease is in affect?

Answer [Rachel Scall] – Whatever the current status is on the unit moves with them. We would keep it the same.

Maria DeInnocentiis – Are you going by the city standards on what is affordable housing? Are you going to come up with your own standards?

Answer [Rachel Scall] – We are going to rely on the city's standards, but we are going to right size it to this community. The reason we are bringing on someone who specializes in Affordable Housing is so that we make sure it fits in that community, especially when it comes to seniors.

Zoning Chairperson Parekh then opened for questions from other board members outside the committee.

James Gallagher – How tall will be the building along 188th Street where the garage is? How many of the apartments will be one, two or three bedrooms?

Answer [Daniel Kaplan] – On 69th Avenue and 188th Street there is a twenty-story building in the center that exists. We have a nineteen, twenty-four, fourteen, twelve and ten story.

Answer [Aaron Polinsky] – The unit mix is not determined. We have tasked the architect team to do it use an average per square feet calculation to get to the 2,000. The number that we used is 950 square feet for an average unit. This far exceeds any city standards. Based on the feedback from the community board, we would have flexibility.

Tamara Osherov – I was here on Monday, and you stated that you came to us previously. That was Federal Realty.

Answer [Rachel Scall] – We have not come to you previously.

Tamara Osherov – When it comes to the Little Meadows' school, isn't that owned by Federal Realty?

Answer [Rachel Scall] – No it is owned by Queens Fresh Meadows LLC. We have no affiliation with Federal Realty.

Tamara Osherov – Do the apartments own the Little Meadows' school?

Answer [Rachel Scall] – Yes.

Caitlin Marziliano – Can you confirm if designated parking is paid parking? What are plans to address that congestion on Peck Avenue?

Answer [Rachel Scall] – We know that a lot of people rely on the street parking. We are looking how we are affecting the street parking and how we are affecting the designated parking, which is the paid parking. Peck Avenue is something that we are looking into. One of the things we were looking at was how to slow down drag racing, but we have to look at the other end of the spectrum with the school buses. We need to start looking at whether there is space there to have two lanes of traffic, a protected lane for the buses and if we would have to move our designs around that.

Zoning Chairperson Parekh then opened for questions from the public.

Resident – Whose idea was it to have a traffic light on the 188th Street circle?

Answer [Rachel Scall] – We do not know who it was, but we are looking at it.

Resident – How many units would be affected on Peck Avenue?

Answer [Rachel Scall] – 65.

Resident – There are 3600 units in Fresh Meadows. Given Fresh Meadows unique design, what would be the green space amount per person? Will future meetings be held at P.S. 26 because the community lives there?

Answer [Rachel Scall] – Yes, there will. We tried for this week, but it fell through. We already have one in the works for June.

Answer [Daniel Kaplan] – I do not have the ratio of open space to units. We have looked at that and bench marked it against all other planned communities that were developed at the same time. I will double check. Fresh Meadows is the lowest and it will remain the lowest.

Resident – You plan to double the population of Fresh Meadows. Why should we not reject your proposal entirely when it goes against the Special Community District? Who is funding this? Why have you not sent out notices of these meetings in a language outside of English?

Answer [Rachel Scall] – This project is being funded by ownership; however, they get the funds. It is a detail to be figured out in the future. It is a private project by ownership. We are not looking to pull one over on anyone. We are seeking to show you ideas that would complement the community. We will get back to you with revised ideas based on everyone feedback. We are working on getting the website translated into multiple languages. We will also try to hold meetings in other languages.

Resident – The 188th Street garage is considered Garage 1. What happens when you demolish that garage and the tenants that rent out that garage? It is not just the tenants in the building, but those who live on 186th Lane.

Answer [Rachel Scall] – We are working on interim parking plans. We are not taking anything down unless everything is replaced. All of the spots that will be affected by the construction, we have to find spots on the campus, within walking distance, within a reasonable distance. That is something we are working on.

Resident – We have a problem with the sewage system already. How is it going to work when you will be reducing the green space and increasing the density?

Answer [Rachel Scall] – One of the things that it would allow us to do is fund repairs for the sewage. That is why we have a civil engineer on board. We are also looking for ways to manage the storm water, so the sewage is not overwhelmed.

Answer [Daniel Kaplan] – Every new building will have a storm water retention tank. This will reduce the amount of storm water load.

Resident – Why should those of us who are residents have any confidence that the new apartments would be of high quality construction when the refurbished apartments in the existing complex are substandard when it comes to electrical appliances, etc.? How can we have any trust that the landlord would not continue to treat the existing 3,300 units with neglect that has existed since you became the landlord? How are we not worried that we might be turning into a slum that will be sitting next to these beautiful new apartments that you are putting up?

Answer [Aaron Polinsky] – We are a family business that takes very good care of our tenants, compared to other landlords who are slumlords. We own and operate our properties for the long term. We have owned and operated this complex for over twenty-five years. When we look to rebuild a building, we look to do it from a long-term perspective. That means resilient materials, doing the right way by not trying to cut corners. The community is in desperate need of refurbishment.

Answer [Sergey Rybak] – This community has an amazing benefit of being a special community. Anything that we design, such as room sizes, bathroom sizes and unit types, will come with a set of plans.

Answer [Rachel Scall] – We hear what everyone is saying about the current conditions and management. It is an ongoing conversation now that we are getting so much feedback.

Resident – I live in the twenty-one-story building, and it seems like the greatest concentration of apartments are going to be in that area on 188th Street. How can you justify that level of concentration in that small area?

Answer [Daniel Kaplan] – We looked very carefully at building spacing. We spread out the buildings so that they are in excess of the minimum requirements for spacing from the city. There is no building that is closer than 60 feet away from another building, which is the width of the street. I will get back to you on the exact dimensions from the twenty-one-story building to the nearest building.

Resident – What would help with the parking is having a 45-degree head in parking. For residents that have fences, what are you going to do about the residents who you are going to tear their fences down?

Answer [Rachel Scall] – We are looking at 45-degree parking. If fences need to come down to repair pipes because of construction, they will have to go back up when it is done.

Resident – Does our voice even matter in this proposal? If we do decide not to proceed with this project, is there a possibility that the project will still move forward?

Answer [Rachel Scall] – Yes, your voice really does matter. We are taking this very seriously and trying to do everything we can to win you over. We will be coming back to you and taking in all the feedback. There may be a little time where we do not see you. That is because we would be working hard behind the scenes.

Hersh Parekh – *We are not voting on anything this evening, but can you tell us what is your current forecasted timeline to begin ULURP? When will the Community Board be asked to vote on this?*

Answer [Rachel Scall] – Realistically, the soonest we can get started with the ULURP would be in a couple of years. We have so much to study and look really closely at the plans to see what changes we are making.

Hersh Parekh – *If you are not familiar with the ULURP process, there are multiple steps where each reviewing body has to act. First, it will come to the Community Board. We will be asked to vote on it as a board. Next, the Borough President's office will be asked to make a recommendation. Then, it goes to City Planning Commission where they are asked to vote. Finally, it does to the City Council. That is approximately a seven to eight month process when they begin that process. We are looking about two years and eight months before anything could be finalized.*

Resident – The security in the seventeen story building is atrocious. How are you going to secure these new buildings? How are you going to let visitors come up to the apartment?

Answer [Aaron Polinsky] – The proposal allows us to bring on consultants who will help us exactly answer that question. One of the consultants is a security consultant. They are going to have a large impact when it comes to lighting, cameras, egress, and everything else that impacts life safety.

Resident – Where did the list of concerns come from at the beginning of the presentation? Was it in consultation with the tenant association? Is the community center and pool a cost for the residents to use or is that an amenity that renters get? If people in townhouses would be moving into other townhouses when you are tearing it down, how is that going to work? The reconstructed townhouses behind the IOG looks like you took away people's backyards. What happens to those people?

Answer [Rachel Scall] – The list of concerns came from speaking with management. That was before we started the outreach.

Answer [Sergey Rybak] – One of the things we asked our design team to do is to build in kind units. Part of the unit mix is not going to be only one, two, three-bedroom apartments. There could be duplex apartments that resemble the townhouse looking concept. We are aware that in order for us to convince someone to leave a townhouse, we must at the very least provide a similar, in kind environment that is brand new and updated.

Resident – Do you get a backyard if there is a fourth floor?

Answer [Sergey Rybak] – For those, there will be a front yard and roof top.

Answer [Daniel Kaplan] – Current codes and standards require minimum room sizes, bathrooms and kitchens to be bigger. A duplex or a two bedroom, which are street facing duplexes which have front yards would be better than previous townhouses.

Resident – On the Oak Grove you want to include commercial space. Where are those people going to park? There are no buses over there. How many outsiders do you anticipate will use the community center and where will they park? Will higher story buildings that you are putting on 188th Street result in the pool being in the shade all day long?

Answer [Rachel Scall] – We are not proposing commercial uses on the Oak Grove. The only commercial uses would be on 188th Street in one or two of the buildings that we are proposing. We want to hear from people as to who should have access. We have studied to make sure the pool is not shaded.

Resident – You are going to put buildings along 188th Street. There are properties along there now. Is that going to get rid of all those spaces?

Answer [Rachel Scall] – No.

Resident – You used the word affordable. What is your definition of affordable and does it include supportive housing? Are you trying to ultimately make this development a co-op?

Answer [Rachel Scall] – No, Queens Fresh Meadows LLC is in the business of rentals. They are not trying to get out of this property. They need rentals to be in business, so we are not trying to turn it into a co-op. We are not looking at supportive housing. We were told that it is not desired here. We are looking at senior affordable housing, and standard all age brackets affordable housing.

Amy Tse – *Is the 950 square foot apartment a one bedroom?*

Answer [Daniel Kaplan] – The Department of Housing and Preservation Development's (HPD) standard one bedroom is about 690 square feet. We are planning to have 950 square feet, which gives us more flexibility. There will be a robust mix of one, two and three bedrooms.

Amy Tse – *One of the buildings had a blackout the past summer. Have you done any studies regarding the stress level of our electrical grid? Assuming that these apartments will be all electric for cooking and heating.*

Answer [Sergey Rybak] – The new code requires apartments to be all electric. Regarding the outages, any building over 125 feet will require a back-up generator. Any resident that lives in these buildings will have the capability to have emergency power. When it comes to the grid, any new major project in New York requires the cooperation of Con Edison. Con Edison requires new projects to install high voltage transformer volts. The high voltage traveling through street will have no influence on the residents. It will come into the new development into a volt and be dedicated to this particular project. Furthermore, the city requires solar power which will help lower energy bills.

Resident – In the last ten years, security has been getting worse. How do you plan to address this?

Answer [Rachel Scall] – We are looking into security now. Not just in the future of this project.

Resident – You will be planning to meet with civic leaders intimately?

Answer [Rachel Scall] – Yes.

Resident – What are you planning to have good education for the children? There is a school on Peck Avenue and P.S. 26 which should have their seats assigned.

Answer [Rachel Scall] – We are planning to continue to work with the School Construction Authority. We need to hear what they need. We have plenty of flexibility in our design to work with them.

Zoning Chairperson Parekh thanked everyone for attending the meeting and encouraged everyone to stay engaged.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,
Soleil Griffin, CB8 Staff
June 5, 2025