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CHPC TESTIMONY

Kew Gardens Hills Rezoning (C 190299 ZMQ & N 190301 ZRQ)

NYC Council Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises

September 4th, 2019

Good morning Chair Moya and members of the Subcommittee. My name is Sheena Kang and I am a policy analyst at the Citizens Housing and Planning Council. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

CHPC is a non-profit research and education organization that has helped to shape public policy in New York since our founding in 1937. CHPC is committed to the advancement of policies that enable the City’s housing stock to better meet the diverse and changing needs of its population.

We commend the Kew Gardens Hills community for seeking the land use changes before us today, which will better allow the local housing stock to meet the needs of growing resident families. Yet the details of the proposed actions should be carefully considered. Cities across the U.S. are banning single-family zoning to try to combat shortage of housing supply, an issue that is all too familiar here in New York. In this context, zoning changes to a single-family area that would not allow for additional density need to be thoroughly evaluated to ensure that their outcomes are optimal.

CHPC is eager to see that the changes sought would reduce the minimum rear yard depth from 30 to 20 feet, an allowance that is unique to R2X districts. This would allow for additional FAR with minimal impacts to neighborhood character or resident exposure to light and air. We commend the applicants

and City Planning for pursuing this particular change and would be enthusiastic to see the City explore options for incorporating this allowance into other low-density residential zoning districts.

While recognizing the desire to maintain built character, CHPC also urges the consideration of two-family zoning or single-family zoning with allowance for Accessory Dwelling Units. Today, families in Kew Gardens Hills are growing and, as a result, encountering the need for larger homes. In the future, many of these same residents may wish to age in place. A secondary unit could allow for a caretaker to live on-site or provide a fixed-income homeowner with supplemental income through rent. These are needs that CHPC has frequently encountered through our work on basement apartment conversions and which are well-worth anticipating ahead of time.

In sum, housing needs in New York City are constantly fluctuating. It is crucial to maintain flexibility in the housing stock, so it can react to our most pressing needs. We are happy to answer questions you may have about these suggestions and appreciate your time. Thank you.