



# How Housing Policies Create Unequal Educational Opportunities: The Case of Queens, New York (Appendix 2)

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## Appendix 2. Narrative Description of Bayside/Little Neck and Jamaica/Hollis Zoning

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Bayside/Little Neck, Queens consists almost entirely of one- and two-family, detached and semi-detached residential development, much of it built in the 1930s and after World War II. The area was substantially rezoned in 2005, when the already low-density zoning was revised because it did not “sufficiently protect against new development that is inconsistent” with the “existing housing context.” The rezoning imposed “tighter floor area allowances and envelope controls,” and prohibited almost all semi-detached and attached housing to “retain and strengthen the existing character” of the community.<sup>1</sup> Today, there are only a few commercial areas; almost all lots are zoned residential, with more than 57 percent of those zoned for single-family detached homes, and most of the remainder allowing only one- or two-family detached (or in just a few areas, semi-attached or attached) homes. Less than 1 percent of the land is zoned for multifamily.

Jamaica/Hollis, Queens was rezoned in 2007 to create a “Special Downtown Jamaica District.” The rezoning was intended to build upon “Jamaica’s strengths as a multimodal transportation hub to support the downtown business district, expand housing and economic opportunities along the area’s major streets and transportation corridors, protect adjacent low-density neighborhoods and create affordable housing.”<sup>2</sup>

To encourage both residential and commercial development near the AirTrain station<sup>3</sup> (which opened in 2006), areas along wider streets were upzoned to less restrictive zones that allow medium density multifamily buildings (generally up to six stories), and provide an inclusionary housing bonus of an additional 33 percent floor area for affordable housing.<sup>4</sup> About 130 blocks were zoned more restrictively to protect their one- and two-family character, and another 50 blocks were zoned more restrictively to match the existing low-rise mixed building character.<sup>5</sup> While only about 12 percent of the lots are zoned for detached single-family homes, many more are zoned for one- or two-family attached row houses. Some areas are zoned R-5, which allows three or four story small apartment houses. In the last decade, a number of high rises (fifteen to thirty stories) have been built in the blocks surrounding the AirTrain station—some are subsidized, all affordable projects, but recent significant developments are mixed income projects. Only about 5 percent of the lots are zoned for that level of density, but the area near the AirTrain is becoming a significant “downtown.” The 2007 rezoning and recent development of Jamaica has been significantly aided by the Greater Jamaica Development Corporation, one of the nation’s first nonprofit community development organizations (founded in 1967).<sup>6</sup>

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<https://tcf.org/content/report/how-housing-policies-create-unequal-educational-opportunities-the-case-of-queens-new-york/>

# Notes

**1** “Bayside Rezoning—Approved!” New York City Department of City Planning, 2005, archived, <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/plans/bayside/bayside.pdf>.

**2** “Special Purpose Districts: Queens,” New York City Department of Planning, 2007, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/planning/zoning/districts-tools/special-purpose-districts-queens.page>.

**3** The Air Train is a special service train line that connects nearby JFK Airport to the New York City subway line and the Long Island Railroad.

**4** “The Jamaica Plan—Approved!” New York City Department of City Planning, 2007, archived, <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/plans/jamaica/jamaica.pdf>.

**5** “The Jamaica Plan,” presentation by the New York City Department of City Planning, August 31, 2007, [https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/plans/jamaica/jamaica\\_presentation.pdf](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/plans/jamaica/jamaica_presentation.pdf).

**6** “About Us,” Greater Jamaica Development Corporation, <https://gjdc.org/our-story/>.