



Hope on the Horizon

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Times have been tough in southeast Queens; in 2008, they got tougher. But U.S. Rep. Gregory Meeks sees hope in the inauguration of President-elect Barack Obama Jan. 20.

Although crime rates have been higher and test scores lower when compared with the rest of the borough, southeast Queens' bright spot was home ownership. The schools were not as good and parents had reason to worry if their children went out after dark. But there were neighborhoods with well-kept homes whose value climbed.

But the onset of the mortgage crisis brought on by subprime mortgages has put home ownership at risk. Last year, nearly 6,000 Queens families lost their homes to foreclosure in 2008. That included 1,215 families in southeast Queens. That statistic, expected to grow, threatens the borough's stability.

Meeks asked his constituents to be patient. He represents Jamaica, St. Albans, Springfield Gardens and Laurelton. These neighborhoods had the highest number of foreclosures in the city due to subprime loans, according to recent statistics from the Neighborhood Economic Development Advocacy Project.

The new administration that takes office Jan. 20 is aware of the need to act urgently to address the housing crisis. Meeks is confident Obama has put together an excellent team and believes the new White House will be sympathetic to the needs of southeast Queens.

Of course, housing is only one side of the coin. Thousands of Queens residents lost jobs in the past year. New investment and creative solutions are needed.

Meeks, who sits on the House Finance Committee, said the United States should encourage foreign companies to move to America or set up regional offices here. That sounds simple, but represents a radical departure from the thinking of the isolationists, who see America in an economic vacuum.

There is room for investment and growth in southeast Queens and it does not matter if the money comes in dollars, euros, Yen, etc. The door should be open for any company that can create jobs and opportunities for out-of-work New Yorkers.

We join Meeks in the hope that we are at or at least near bottom and that the future will be bright in Queens and throughout America.

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