



## **Banks' foreclosure freeze may help SE Qns. Debtors**

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*By Ivan Pereira*

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In a move that could come as a relief to Queens homeowners, four of the largest banking institutions announced last week that they would suspend foreclosures temporarily while the federal government plans to fix the economy.

The head administrators of Citigroup, JP Morgan Chase, Bank of America and Morgan Stanley told U.S. House of Representatives Financial Services Committee Chairman Barney Frank (D-Mass.) Friday they would put a halt to the foreclosures until next month. President Barack Obama was scheduled to announce a new plan Wednesday that would try to save the slumping housing industry, which has been hurt by a record number of foreclosures.

In letters to Frank, JPMorgan and Bank of America said they would suspend foreclosing houses purchased with their loans until March 6, Citi announced it would suspend foreclosures until March 12 and Morgan Stanley said its freeze would be in effect for three weeks.

“Three weeks is adequate time for the [U.S.] Treasury [Department] to announce, and for us to implement, a new plan,” JPMorgan CEO Jamie Dimon wrote in a letter to Frank.

Queens has been greatly affected by the subprime crisis and has the highest foreclosure rate in the city, according to recent statistics. **The borough had 5,578 foreclosures in 2008, according to a study by the Neighborhood Economic Development Advocacy Project.**

The majority of those foreclosed homes are in southeast Queens neighborhoods, such as Springfield Gardens, St. Albans and Laurelton, the study showed.

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