

*From the Office of
Council Member Joann Ariola, NYC Council District 32*

Legislative Office
250 Broadway Suite 1555
New York, NY 10007
Phone: 212-788-7069



Ozone Park District Office
93-06 101 Avenue
Ozone Park, NY 11416
Phone: 718-738-1083

Rockaway District Office
114-12 Beach Channel Dr
Suite 1
Rockaway Park, NY 11416
Phone: 718-318-6411

May 7, 2024

NYC Parks
Queens Borough Commissioner
Jackie Langsam
The Overlook, Forest Park
Kew Gardens, NY 11415

Dear Commissioner Langsam:

For the past four years, Freedom Drive in Forest Park has been closed to vehicles. Originally shut down as part of New York City's Open Streets Plan in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the continued closure of Freedom Drive has become a constant headache for my constituents.

The initial plan by the City of New York was admirable – seeking to provide more space for residents to enjoy the outdoors while maintaining social distancing was something many felt was necessary during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in May of 2020. Today, however, four years after that initial closure, residents in the areas around Forest Park are still left with this lingering reminder of a dark period in New York's history. This reminder forces them to take unnecessary detours around the park, and drastically increases travel time for local residents. Given the lack of reliable public transit in the area, travel by personal vehicle is the primary mode of transportation for many. And this travel is made much more difficult by continuing to uphold outdated Open Streets protocols.

To add to the confusion over this matter, the Freedom Drive closure does not seem to appear on the DOT website listing the streets still experiencing full or partial shutdowns as a result of Open Streets. Freedom Drive seems to have fallen through the cracks, with no single agency seeking to take responsibility for its closure, and the subsequent nuisance that its closure causes for residents of Woodhaven, Glendale, and beyond.

We implore you to reconsider the ongoing closure of Freedom Drive, and re-open that road to vehicular travel. As we take steps to fully return to pre-pandemic normalcy, it is important for the residents surrounding Forest Park to have this important artery restored to its intended use.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Honorable Joann Ariola
NYC Council Member
District 32



Sherry Algreto
Chairwoman
Community Board 9, Queens

Cc: James Mclelland, District Manager CB 9
Nicole Garcia, NYC DOT, Queens Commissioner