

DAILY
NEWS

Queens

A line's
drawn on
zoning

By CLAIRE SERANT

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A Flushing electronics maker is charging that the city's push to allow large retailers in manufacturing zones without the usual review process will only drive him and other businesses out of town.

The proposed zoning change, said Mark Kupferberg, will prompt industrial landlords to hike rents, forcing small manufacturers to leave town or close shop.

"The threat of a [zoning] change sets off speculation," said Kupferberg, vice president of Kepco Inc., a 50-year-old manufacturer of electronics and power supplies located at Sanford Ave. and 131st St.

"It endangers many manufacturing jobs," Kupferberg said. "It can't be good for the city."

His family-owned business stands near Home Depot's store on Avery Ave., which occupies the former Taystee Bread plant site. The Kupferbergs own roughly 55,000 square feet of the 145,000-square-foot property they occupy. They lease the rest.

"Our landlord told us if he converted to retail, he can get five times what we currently pay," Kupferberg said. "Our lease is up in two years."

Two weeks ago, Mark Kupferberg was among several opponents across the city who challenged the zoning change at the City Planning Commission's first public hearing on the matter. Another hearing is scheduled for Wednesday.

The proposal, which is backed by Mayor Giuliani, would allow large retailers



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SHOCKING: Mark Kupferberg, vice president of Kepco Inc., a family-owned electronics firm, at Flushing factory.

to move into manufacturing zones without undergoing city land-use review.

Currently, retailers who want to erect buildings of more than 10,000 square feet in industrial areas must file for a special permit and participate in the city's Uniform Land Use Review Procedure. The policy considers community input on proposed building projects.

"We don't see big-box retail as bad," Kupferberg said. "They have a wonderful role to play in the economy of the city. However, introduced in an unplanned way... the effect will be negative."

The proposed change has the Kupferbergs thinking about leaving the Flushing factory they have occupied

for 47 years. Kepco has 250 employees, 95% of whom live within the five boroughs. Jobs at the facility range from highly skilled technical positions to blue-collar assembly-line posts.

Richard Lipsky, a small-business lobbyist, said Kepco's concerns are warranted.

"Their situation explains what's wrong with the mayor's plan," said Lipsky. "It targets industrial land for rezoning, and the unintended result will drive existing manufacturers out of the city."

Deputy Mayor Fran Reiter, who oversees economic development and planning for the mayor, declined to comment on the impact the city's zoning proposal will have on industrial property leases.