

ZQA

Zoning for Quality and Affordability (ZQA) is a package of targeted changes to update zoning to support senior and affordable housing and produce better buildings.

Why ZQA?

Current zoning regulations hamper the creation of affordable housing by imposing complex and unnecessary requirements that add costs and limit our ability to serve New Yorkers' diverse housing needs.

In addition, zoning regulations intended to make buildings fit in with their surroundings have often produced substandard ground floors and flat dull buildings that are inconsistent with the traditional character of neighborhoods.

With ZQA, zoning will better support the creation of affordable housing, particularly much-needed affordable housing for seniors, while also encouraging well-designed buildings that support vibrant, livable neighborhoods.

Affordable Senior Housing

Seniors are the fastest growing demographic in our city – projected to increase by 400,000 by 2040. One in five seniors now lives on less than \$11,000 a year, making the need for affordable senior housing immediate and dire.

ZQA will help enable more senior housing and care facilities to be built across the city, giving seniors more options to remain within their communities as they age. Zoning already allows more affordable senior housing to be built on a lot than ordinary housing, but limits on the shape and size of buildings do not provide enough room to fit a well-designed building that is accessible for seniors.

ZQA will allow limited additional height to accommodate this affordable senior housing – generally one or two more stories. The additional space allowed for affordable senior housing could *never* be converted to market-rate housing.

Inclusionary Housing

In medium- and high-density districts where Voluntary Inclusionary Housing incentives exist for buildings providing affordable housing, some limits on the size and shape of buildings have hindered the creation of affordable housing. In these areas, ZQA will allow buildings providing permanently affordable housing limited additional height to address this issue.

Subsidizing Affordable Housing, Not Parking

Building parking is expensive – each space can cost as much as \$50,000 to build. Vehicle registration data shows that residents of affordable housing in transit-served areas own far fewer cars than other residents: indeed, in affordable senior housing, the data shows that 95% of residents do not own a car.

ZQA allows builders of new affordable housing to make decisions about parking based on the actual needs of residents, by making parking optional in a designated “transit zone” where car ownership is low. It also allows existing affordable senior housing buildings to repurpose their underused parking lots – for instance, to provide open space for residents, or more senior housing.

By making affordable housing more efficient, these changes enable taxpayer dollars to go further toward meeting the affordable housing needs of New Yorkers.

“We have thousands and thousands of low-income seniors on our wait lists for housing. We even have wait lists for our tenant gardens. We do not have a single wait list for parking.”

- Catholic Charities of Brooklyn and Queens
Largest developer of affordable housing for low-income seniors in NYC

Better-Designed Buildings

Contextual zoning regulations for medium- and high-density districts are intended to make buildings that fit in with the surrounding neighborhood fabric. But these rules, created in the 1980s, have also produced unintended results – substandard retail spaces with low ceilings or no retail at all on commercial streets. The rules also produced ground-floor residences, flush with the sidewalk, that lack privacy. Buildings often cannot provide features like bay windows, courtyards, or planted areas in front that are common in traditional NYC buildings.

By allowing just five feet of additional height, ZQA promotes ground floors that are more inviting to neighborhood retail space in commercial districts. That change also allows for apartments set slightly above sidewalk level, for privacy. A cap will be set on the number of stories in a building - in no instance may additional floors be added.

By allowing for bay windows and courtyards, ZQA will result in buildings that “line up” more harmoniously with the facades of neighboring buildings. It enables the creation of better apartment layouts on upper floors for all types of buildings, including affordable housing.

Before ZQA



With ZQA



ZQA Will Not...

ZQA will not increase residential densities, create new market-rate floor area, or encourage teardowns or displacement.

ZQA will not remove any protections for historic districts or landmarked buildings. Any changes in historic districts or to landmarked buildings would need to secure approvals from the Landmarks Preservation Commission, just as they do today.

ZQA will not impose one-size-fits-all solutions - every zoning district that exists today, including Special Districts, is treated individually.

For an explanation of how ZQA will or will not apply in your neighborhood, see <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/zoning-qa/zoning-for-affordability-1.shtml>

ZQA and Housing New York

ZQA is one of the many initiatives that make up the *Housing New York* plan to create and preserve 200,000 affordable homes for New Yorkers at a range of incomes.

It will encourage more efficient, better designed buildings that add vibrancy to communities, make taxpayer dollars go further to meet our affordable housing needs, and provide more options to accommodate the diverse housing needs of seniors.

