

Community Workshop: Zoning for Flood Resilient Retail

@ LMHQ, 150 Broadway, 20th floor, Manhattan

Location: LMHQ, 150 Broadway, 20th floor, Manhattan

Date: November 21, 2017, 9:00am-11:00am

List of DCP Staff

Zoning: Manuela Powidayko/Jean You/Ryann McMahon, Waterfront and Open Space: Melissa Herlitz/Michael Marrella/Laura Kenny/Mary Kimball/Allan Zaretsky, Brooklyn Office: Catie Ferrara/Daphne Lundi, Staten Island Office: Olivia Sullivan, Manhattan Office: Richard Suarez/Alison Brown, Urban Design: Ryan Jacobson/Crystal Jane Eksi

Other Agency Staff // Mayor's Office of Recovery and Resiliency: Rachel Finkelstein, NYC Small Business Services: Lara Birnback, Manhattan Borough President's Office: Lucian Reynolds

Co-Sponsors // Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President

Attendees // Ryan Brenner, Joanna Crispe, Daniella Davi, Mark Diller, Sarah Dougherty, Lisa Dragone, Yangbo Du, Frank Farance, Sally Fisher, Cora Fung, Catherine Hanna, Brian Johnson, Brendan Kane, Louis Kleinman, Allegra Legrande, Anthony Notaro, Michael Porto, Alex Roche, Daniel Rojo, Nick Sbordone, Bob Schneck, Toby Sebastian Snyder, Lia Soorenian, Peter Sullivan, Marco Tamayo, Teresa Tota, Irina Vinnitskaya



Workshop Description

Summary

NYC Department of City Planning hosted a workshop on zoning for flood resilient retail, with a focus on new buildings. The event began with a presentation on flood risk and resilient building requirements, issues and challenges faced by new resilient commercial buildings, and the different zoning tools available to help encourage active commercial corridors within the floodplain. Then, participants engaged in a workshop to dive deeper into some of these issues and challenges. The event concluded with participants sharing suggestions for a future update to special zoning rules that govern development in the floodplain, including incentives and urban design requirements.

Goals

1. Learn about flood risk in Manhattan and the resilient building design options for businesses in the floodplain;
2. Learn about a new grant program from NYC Small Business Services for Hurricane Sandy-impacted small businesses;
3. Find out how zoning can promote floodproofing strategies that ensure vibrant retail corridors;
4. Provide feedback on zoning incentives for keeping retail spaces level with the sidewalk within Manhattan's floodplain; and
5. Share input on urban design priorities to mitigate the impact of possible blank walls that may result from constructing resilient mixed-use buildings.

Summary of Main Takeaways

Feedback regarding zoning issues and recommendations-

- Floor Area Ratio (FAR) exemptions to offset the loss of subgrade cellars and the high cost of investing in dry floodproofed ground floors were generally supported.
- Regulation of these exemptions was emphasized, as participants would like to see visually congruent streetscapes, as well as safeguard small businesses from being forced out post-redevelopment.
- Dissatisfaction surrounding ground floor transparency standards was stated, as some felt the point of measurement should be from the curb, rather than the Design Flood Elevation (DFE).
- The construction challenges of floodproofing semi-detached and attached buildings was raised.

Feedback regarding second floor retail uses and design options-

- There was support for allowing commercial uses to operate on the second floor to offset the loss of subgrade cellars and the high cost of dry floodproofing.
- While there were varied answers for what types of uses would be viable on the second floor, there was strong consensus that the scale and type of both the business (i.e. a restaurant versus an office) and street (i.e. a narrow sidewalk versus a wide sidewalk) would determine the suitability of operating a business on the second floor.
- Many design options to mitigate access issues and visual barriers were discussed. Generally, internal ramps were preferred, as exterior ramps would impose both visually and physically on the streetscape. Comments reinforced the need for zoning to ensure active and strong visual connections between the first floor and streetscape.
- Other mitigation tools were discussed, with strong support for green walls and semi-public spaces, and less support for wall art, street furniture, and dynamic façades.

Feedback regarding non-zoning issues and concerns-

- Several participants described a lack of clarity and information concerning floodproofing materials and techniques, in relation to what is allowed by DOB, and what is accepted by insurance companies.
- Discussions focused on ensuring that new resiliency requirements interface with historic designations and character.
- There was emphasis placed on both education and enforcement of new standards, to ensure that resilient buildings can remain competitive and prevent the loss of affordable rentable space.
- Concerns were shared about the potential risk for businesses occupying buildings where increasing resilience or retrofitting isn't possible.

