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**CITY PLANNING COMMISSION BEGINS PUBLIC REVIEW OF ZONING CHANGES TO PERMIT LOFT
LEGALIZATION IN BROOKLYN**

The City Planning Commission today referred for public review amendments to the Zoning Resolution to allow the legalization of loft residences in specified manufacturing areas in Brooklyn. The text amendments are the result of work begun by an interagency working group formed in Fall 2000 to address the problem of widespread illegal loft residences with potentially hazardous conditions. The zoning amendments will permit the occupants of illegal loft residences in the affected areas to remain while their residences are brought up to code compliance.

In conjunction with the zoning law, the City has proposed state legislation (amending Article 7C of the Multiple Dwelling Law, known as the Loft Law) which would provide rent protections to loft tenants while specifying a more prompt and effective procedure for bringing illegal loft units into code compliance. The proposed legislation would permit legalization of loft dwellings only where such dwellings conform to zoning. The proposed zoning amendments are needed because residences are not normally permitted in manufacturing-zoned areas.

City Planning Chairman Joseph B. Rose said, These zoning amendments balance the need to accommodate new housing opportunities with the need to protect residents from harmful impacts such as hazardous materials and fumes often associated with manufacturing zones while preserving adequate areas for industrial activity. Regulations must evolve to acknowledge changing land use patterns, public safety and the integrity of city laws.

The Department of City Planning has analyzed a list of Brooklyn buildings identified by the Fire Department as possible illegal residential lofts and studied these buildings for use, occupancy, zoning, legal status and neighborhood context. As a result of the study, the Department found 45 buildings with an estimated 616 dwelling units in the neighborhoods of Down Under Manhattan Bridge, Williamsburg, East Williamsburg, Greenpoint and the area south of the Navy Yard where residential use is not permitted, but continued residential occupancy would be appropriate because these areas have a mixed-use character with a substantial residential presence. The Department identified an additional 86 buildings with illegal loft occupancy in these areas that are not on the Fire Departments list.

The Loft Law, which dates from the early 1980's, legalized increasing residential use in industrial buildings located mainly in Manhattan, but also in a few cases in Brooklyn and Queens. The Loft Law allowed loft units meeting certain requirements to obtain the status of interim multiple dwellings with the goal of meeting residential health and safety codes. However, the current Loft Law has resulted in the legalization of only half the loft dwellings that qualified for interim multiple dwelling status. The Loft Law has been renewed periodically, and currently expires on June 30, 2001, but these extensions did not allow the legalization of loft dwellings initially occupied after the early 1980's.

Brooklyn community boards 1, 2 and 4 will have 45 days to review the text amendment before the Commission will hold its public hearing.