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CITY PLANNING LAUNCHES PUBLIC REVIEW OF CITYWIDE ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT TO PREVENT PARKING IN FRONT YARDS AND TIGHTEN CURB CUT REGULATIONS

Proposal Would Improve Streetscapes in Residential Districts

November 16, 2009 —City Planning Commissioner Amanda M. Burden announced the beginning of public review today for a citywide text amendment that would prevent parking pads from being constructed in front yards of single and two family districts throughout the city, as well as new curb cuts. The [Residential Streetscape Preservation text amendment](#) addresses the concerns of residents and elected officials that parking in front yards and inappropriate curb cuts are disrupting neighborhood character. The proposal would also close loopholes in front yard planting requirements, establish new curb cut rules in medium and higher density districts to preserve on-street parking spaces and clarify parking obligations for new and existing buildings.

“Maintaining the integrity and predictability of the streetscape and ensuring that there are green front yards is key to fostering inviting, walkable blocks in the residential neighborhoods that New Yorkers love. But many neighborhoods have been blemished as front yards have been turned into parking spaces, interrupting the pedestrian experience,” said Commissioner Burden. “This proposal will require planting in front yards, move parking to where it belongs and prohibit inappropriate curb cuts. Together with our previous zoning initiatives that require new buildings to provide secure indoor bike parking, and that mandate street tree planting for new developments, planting of front yards and landscaping of large commercial parking lots, this text amendment will help create a livable, sustainable city with a healthy environment and an improved quality of life.”

The citywide text amendment will affect nearly all community districts by:

- Strengthening requirements in low density districts (R1 to R5) to make sure homes have adequate front yard plantings, furthering the goals of Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s PlaNYC2030 strategy to green the city.
- Applying stricter parking rules in single and two family districts by prohibiting new parking pads in front yards. Instead, curb cuts will only be allowed to access driveways in side yards or in garages within houses.
- Prohibiting curb cuts for buildings less than 40 feet wide in “B” districts – which are characterized by row houses with planted front yards and no front yard parking – to make sure that an owner cannot eliminate a landscaped front yard for a parking spot, and take away a public on-street parking space.
- Introducing curb cut rules for residential parking spaces in medium and higher density districts (R6, R7 and R8) and their commercial equivalents, where no curb cut rules exist today. The new rules will prevent continuous curb cuts that are unsightly, create pedestrian and vehicular conflicts, eliminate on-street parking spaces, and reduce retail continuity in commercial districts. The proposal will allow curb cuts that access parking lots or garages with multiple parking spaces, and prevent continuous rows of curb cuts, where each can access just a single space.
- In Manhattan Community Districts 1 through 8 and Queens Districts 1 and 2, authorization for new curb cuts on wide streets and for adding parking in existing buildings will only be granted if the changes do not negatively impact pedestrian movement or streetscape character.
- Ensuring that adequate parking is provided for any new dwelling unit added to existing buildings in R3 and R4 districts. Under the proposal, turning a single-family home to a two-family residence will require one new off-street parking space in addition to any existing off-street parking spaces on the lot. The proposal will also ensure that throughout the city, parking spaces in older apartment buildings built before parking was required by zoning cannot be removed if those spaces would be required under current zoning regulations.

The community board now has 60 days to review the proposed zoning text amendment, after which it will go to the Borough President, the City Planning Commission and the City Council as part of the city’s public review process. For specifics of the proposed zoning text or more details on the review timeline, please visit the [DCP website](#).

Department of City Planning

The Department of City Planning (DCP) promotes strategic growth and development in the City, in part, by initiating comprehensive, consensus-based planning and zoning changes for individual neighborhoods and business districts. It supports the City Planning Commission and each year reviews more than 500 land use applications for actions such as zoning changes and disposition of City property. The Department assists both government agencies and the public by providing policy analysis and technical assistance relating to housing, transportation, community facilities, demography and public space.