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Release #7-99

December 8, 1999

DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING ANNOUNCES THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE REVISION TO THE CITY'S ZONING RESOLUTION IN 40 YEARS

Joseph B. Rose, Chairman of the City Planning Commission, today released the most comprehensive revision to the City's Zoning Resolution in forty years. The proposal, titled the "Unified Bulk Program," is a sweeping reform of the zoning governing the height and shape of buildings throughout the city. It would replace confusing, anachronistic and often contradictory regulations with a clear set of rules that are practical and consistent. It seeks to uphold values of urban form, neighborhood character and scale. For the first time, all neighborhoods, outside the central business districts, would have height limits.

"Our goal is to establish reasonable parameters for new development, including height limits, that will give communities, developers and regulators a clear sense of what is and is not allowed in each zoning district. We will close loopholes that have produced buildings far taller and larger than was intended when the Zoning Resolution was adopted," said Mr. Rose.

"Today we are officially discarding the 'tower-in-the-park' ideology that New York City adopted in 1961, which assumed a large-scale urban renewal approach to redevelopment. We need an intelligible zoning ordinance that respects neighborhood context, while also assuring that New York City is able to develop much needed housing and commercial space," he continued.

Chairman Rose also asserted that, "We will assure that there is needed flexibility to accommodate architectural innovation with a special permit process to address unique conditions and encourage design excellence. We will replace the interpretive legal gymnastics that have prevailed for decades with an open process that assures full public review of important actions."

The Unified Bulk Program includes the following elements:

- **Height and Setback Controls.** The proposed height limits and setback rules would replace the multiple alternative controls in the existing zoning with one or two building envelopes for each zoning district. The controls are designed to reflect the general built character of the zoning district and to allow all the permitted floor area to be used on a typical lot. They would constrain the transfer of development rights and eliminate the complex system of sky exposure planes, height factors and open space ratios designed to produce tower-in-the-park development.
- **Split Lots and Zoning Lot Mergers.** The rules governing zoning lots that are split by zoning district boundaries would be tightened and simplified so that split lots do not become an excuse for ignoring distinctions between zoning districts. Constraints would be placed on zoning lot mergers.
- **Bonuses for Public Space.** As-of-right bonuses for residential plazas and for other public open spaces that have been found not to produce significant public benefits would be eliminated.
- **Density Controls.** Development would be regulated with a single floor area ratio and lot coverage requirement for each zoning district. Density would be governed by a single set of dwelling unit limits based on permitted floor area.
- **Design.** A City Planning Commission special permit would be available to assure that the tighter bulk constraints do not impose unexpected and onerous burdens in specific situations and do not unduly inhibit innovative design.

The proposal is currently undergoing environmental review and should begin the formal public review process early next year.

[Read the "Unified Bulk Program" proposal](#)