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City Planning Begins Public Review on Far Reaching *Zone Green* Proposal

Regulatory Changes Would Go Further Than Any Major US City to Remove Obstacles to Green Buildings and Energy Efficiency

Zone Green Builds on PlaNYC to Create Potential Annual Energy Savings of Up to \$800 Million, Improve the Environment & Create Jobs

December 12, 2011 - City Planning Commissioner Amanda M. Burden today unveiled details of a comprehensive initiative to remove impediments to measures that make buildings more energy efficient and enable them to produce their own energy. The proposed zoning changes that officially entered public review today would help facilitate green investment such as generating solar energy on rooftops or improving the energy efficiency of exterior walls. These changes would focus on existing buildings, which make up 85% of the buildings we will have in 2030. They would also encourage new high performance buildings. The new zoning will be complemented by upcoming proposed Green Building Amendments to the City's energy code as well as amendments to the State Multiple Dwelling Law, changes which together are called [Zone Green](#). This program is a key component of the Bloomberg Administration's PlaNYC for greening the City's roughly one million buildings, which cost \$15 billion per year to power and heat, and account for 80% of the city's greenhouse gas emissions. Improving the energy efficiency of our buildings and enabling them to produce their own clean energy represents a critical contribution to the global environment. The *Zone Green* proposal would save money for property owners, businesses and residents, unlocking as much as \$800 million in potential annual energy savings for New Yorkers, based on the total estimated number of buildings eligible to make use of the provisions. In addition, it would foster local urban food production by encouraging greenhouses and farms on rooftops.

At a recent conference on the future of New York co-sponsored by the Department of City Planning (DCP), Deputy Mayor Robert K. Steel hailed the *Zone Green* initiative as an important policy, both environmentally and economically, saying, "The City's comprehensive new green zoning proposal to remove current regulations that impede construction of green buildings and discourage or prevent energy-efficient retro-fits in existing buildings would further shrink our carbon footprint and create construction jobs in making building upgrades. It would improve the quality of the air we breathe by reducing our dependence on electricity generated by using fossil fuels and cut energy costs for businesses, residential landlords, and individual homeowners."

Commissioner Burden said, "*Zone Green* will promote energy efficient and green design. It will foster energy efficient building walls, sun control devices on windows, solar panels, and green roofs. This zoning text will give homeowners and building owners more choices to make investments that save money, save energy, and improve the quality of our environment, bringing our aging buildings into the 21st century. This is another example of using zoning in innovative ways to address the long-term needs of the city."

This proposal expands upon recommendations from the Green Codes Task Force convened by the Mayor and City Council Speaker Christine Quinn to identify regulatory changes that will promote green buildings. The Task Force was comprised of over 100 leading industry professionals in design and construction fields.

City Council Speaker Christine Quinn said, "By expanding on the 111 recommendations made by the Green Codes Task Force, the *Zone Green* initiative will not only help the environment, but will also save the city and its residents millions of dollars in energy costs, while creating new green construction jobs."

Zone Green builds on the Bloomberg Administration's PlaNYC accomplishments and City Planning's extensive agenda of rezoning that has helped reinforce NYC as a more sustainable and transit oriented city.

"PlaNYC's vision of a greener, greater New York comes more into focus thanks to Commissioner Burden's new *Zone Green* proposal," said David Bragdon, Director of the Mayor's Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability. "New York City pioneered the original concept of zoning in the early 20th century, and these amendments show how we are now pioneering for the needs of the 21st century, by enabling property owners and residents to more easily improve their energy efficiency and take advantage of innovative green building practices."

Russell Unger, Executive Director of Urban Green Council said, "Most people think of zoning as just saying what can be built where and how high it can be. The *Zone Green* proposal shows it's so much more than that – it can affect whether we have renewable energy or green roofs, it can encourage tried and true approaches to energy efficiency like shading windows, and it can be used to encourage cutting-edge, super-insulated buildings. Today's announcement continues a tradition of NYC leading the way on zoning."

The proposed zoning is unique in that it may not only result in promoting green construction, but also facilitate green upgrades of existing buildings. Most zoning changes are prospective, and prescribe rules for how new buildings in affected areas may be built. But because the City's existing building stock also represents the most significant source of opportunities to save money and reduce energy consumption, this zoning has specific provisions to facilitate the retrofitting of those existing buildings with new features to save and generate energy.

Key *Zone Green* zoning proposals

- To create energy efficient building walls, allow existing buildings to add external insulation within their property line by exempting insulation from floor area and yard requirements. Reward new buildings that exceed current energy efficiency standards by partially exempting more efficient walls from floor area calculations.
- Revise regulations to allow solar panels on roofs to penetrate maximum building height limits.
- Permit sun control devices such as vertical or horizontal shades or screens to project from building facades over required open areas. These devices can help reduce the need for air conditioning and lighting, but are often prohibited.
- Amend regulations to foster green roofs and skylights as well as the use of rooftops for managing stormwater or accommodating cogeneration facilities. Allow more flexibility for bulkheads to accommodate multiple rooftop uses.
- Subject to certification from the Chair of the City Planning Commission, waive floor area and height limits for rooftop greenhouses on buildings without residences or sleeping accommodations.
- Wind energy generation makes the most sense on taller buildings and near the waterfront where winds are more consistent. Proposed zoning changes would allow small wind turbines above building height limits on buildings taller than 100 feet and on buildings lower than 100 feet near the waterfront, except in low-density residence districts.

The proposed text amendment will undergo a complete public review process, including referral for 60 days to all community boards, borough boards and borough presidents for review and comment, followed by review by the City Planning Commission and City Council.

Related *Zone Green* proposals

Related City legislation would tighten the energy performance standards for a building's envelope (walls, windows, roof). This would ensure the long-term energy efficiency of these buildings.

Zone Green also proposes a targeted amendment to the New York State Multiple Dwelling Law to allow the external insulation of buildings built before 1961.

Department of City Planning

The Department of City Planning (DCP) promotes strategic growth, transit-oriented development, and sustainable communities in the City, in part by initiating comprehensive, consensus-based planning and zoning changes for individual neighborhoods and business districts, as well as establishing policies and zoning regulations applicable citywide. 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, waterfront and public space.