



DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING
CITY OF NEW YORK

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

May 15, 2015

Dear New Yorker,

As you know, the Department of City Planning is in the process of preparing a targeted set of citywide zoning text amendments (“Zoning for Quality and Affordability” - ZQA) to promote affordable housing and better quality buildings. While we continue to work on drafting the text amendment itself, I want to provide you with an update about some important adjustments we are making to the process and to the proposal.

In February, we released information about the proposal to enable the public to understand the issues we are addressing and our proposed solutions, as well as to set forth the elements of the proposal that will be assessed in the environmental review process.

During these initial stages of the public conversation we received helpful feedback on the substance of the proposal, but also reactions about the process.

On process, we heard that communities should have more time to consider the proposal, and more detailed information regarding how it would affect their specific neighborhoods. Therefore, as a first step, we extended the comment period for the environmental scope for almost an additional month (to April 30th), and held information sessions for Community Board leadership in each borough.

We are committed to a transparent and open process that enables full and knowledgeable input from the public. In this regard, we have offered meetings to all 59 Community Boards to discuss the proposal with them prior to the formal public review process. These meetings will take place in late May and June.

In addition, we are creating individual profiles for each Community Board that highlights those elements of the proposal that would or would not apply in their communities. These will be publicly available on the City Planning website shortly so each community can understand what the proposal means for it.

Carl Weisbrod, Director
Department of City Planning
22 Reade Street – 2N, New York, N.Y. 10007-1216
(212) 720-3200 FAX (212) 720-3219
www.nyc.gov/planning

As for the formal public review process itself, we are committed to allowing the full customary two months for Community Boards and Borough Presidents (and Borough Boards) to review the proposal following their scheduled summer recesses. And of course, we will make the draft proposed zoning text on our website prior to the start of the formal public review process.

With respect to the substance of the proposal, many of the comments we received expressed concern that the changes in height limits proposed for certain contextual zoning districts might have unintended effects (such as unduly encouraging enlargements of existing buildings) that are not consistent with the proposal's core housing and design objectives.

DCP is incorporating into the proposal a set of refinements to the proposed height changes for R6B, R7A and R8B zoning districts, which will focus the proposal more squarely on our core goals of promoting affordable housing and better quality buildings. With these changes, over 95 percent of medium and high density contextually zoned areas would experience height limit changes of 5 feet or less for all buildings. For buildings providing Inclusionary or affordable senior housing, height limits would change by zero, one, or two stories in over 95 percent of these areas. Specifically, these changes are as follows:

In R8B districts – Maintain the current maximum height of 75 feet that exists today (the proposal previously identified an increase to 85 feet).

In R7A districts – Allow a basic maximum height of 85 feet (a 5 foot increase, instead of the 15 foot increase previously proposed), and 105 feet for buildings providing affordable senior housing or Inclusionary Housing. With this change, only buildings that provide affordable housing would be permitted additional stories.

In R6B districts – Allow a maximum height of 55 feet for all buildings (a maximum of 65 feet was previously proposed for affordable senior housing or Inclusionary Housing). This height is sufficient to accommodate all permitted floor area with flexibility for better quality buildings.

The Department will continue to provide updated information about the proposal on our website, at:

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/zoning-qa/zoning-for-affordability-1.shtml>

If you have any questions or comments about this proposal, please feel free to contact the project team at AHOUSING@planning.nyc.gov.

Best Regards,



Carl Weisbrod