

Housing New York

Zoning for Quality and Affordability

Summary

As part of the City's coordinated efforts under Housing New York – the Mayor's ten-year, five-borough housing plan – the Department of City Planning is proposing a set of targeted changes to zoning regulations to support the creation of new affordable housing and encourage better residential buildings.

The Zoning for Quality and Affordability text amendment (ZQA) advances numerous goals of Housing New York, including making the city more affordable to a wide range of New Yorkers, and fostering diverse, livable communities with buildings that contribute to the character and quality of neighborhoods.

Since the release of Housing New York, the Department of City Planning, working with the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, communities, nonprofit housing groups, architects, affordable housing developers, and other practitioners, has identified a set of zoning changes that would address the needs of affordable housing, aid efficient use of housing subsidies, and encourage higher-quality residential buildings in the city's medium- and high-density neighborhoods.

What is the proposal aiming to achieve?

Zoning establishes limits on the use, size, and shape of buildings, with numerous zoning districts mapped in the city's diverse neighborhoods to reflect their varying density and character. These limits help give shape to neighborhoods and predictability to their future. But sometimes they also have unintended consequences, discouraging the very types of outcomes they were intended to encourage. This proposal aims to address several ways in which these regulations, drafted a generation ago, have in practice discouraged the affordability and quality of recent buildings.

Affordability:

Make it easier to provide the range of **affordable senior housing and care facilities** needed to meet the varied needs of an aging population, and to help seniors remain in their communities

Enable **Inclusionary Housing** buildings, which provide mixed-income housing, to construct quality buildings that fit the full amount of housing they are allowed under zoning today

Reduce unnecessarily high costs of building **transit-accessible affordable housing**, and free up resources to create more affordable housing citywide.

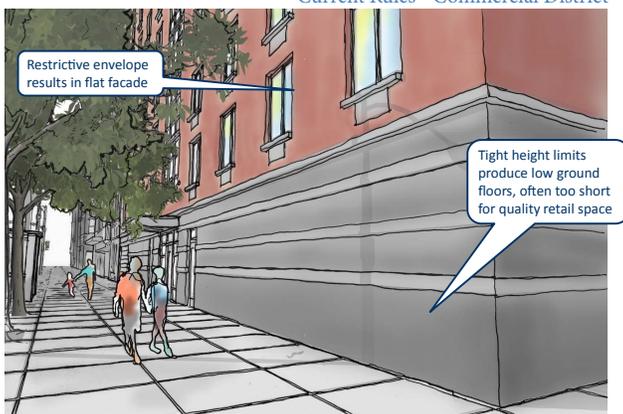
Quality:

Change rules that lead to flat, dull apartment buildings, to accommodate and encourage façade articulation, courtyards, and other elements that provide visual variety and make the pedestrian experience more interesting

Encourage better ground-floor retail spaces and residential units with adequate ceiling heights

Maintain rules that work well today, including the essential rules of “contextual” zoning districts and lower-density zoning districts

Current Rules - Commercial District



With Proposal - Commercial District



What kind of changes are proposed, and what areas would be affected?

The proposal is tailored to address issues specific to different neighborhood contexts:

In medium-and high-density zoning districts, key changes under the proposal would:

Allow residential buildings limited additional height – no more than five feet, in over 95% of cases – if they provide a taller ground floor

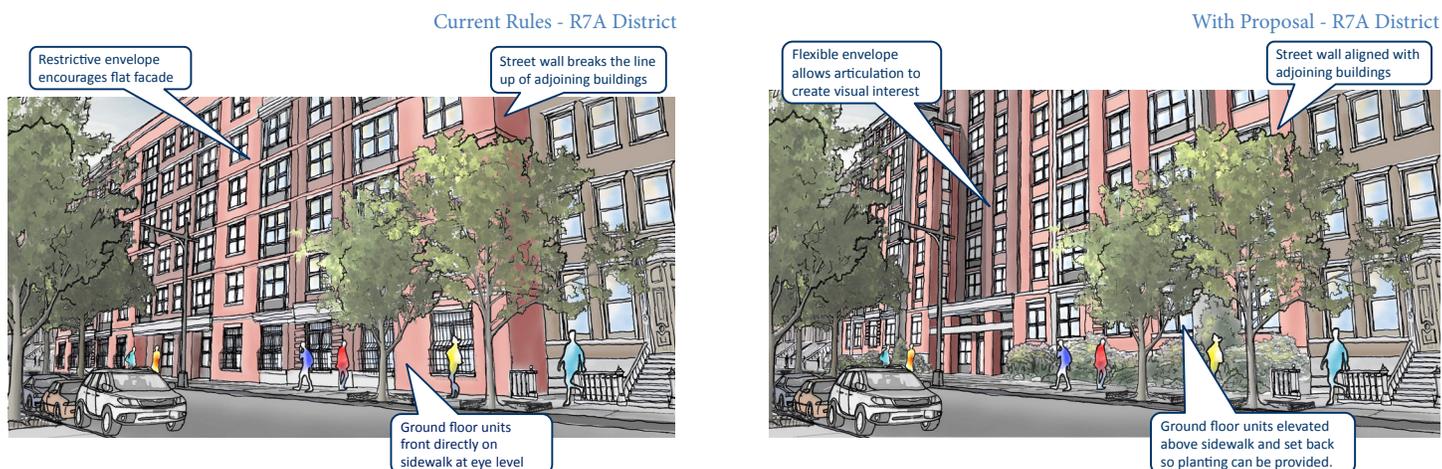
Allow limited additional height – no more than one or two stories, in over 95% of cases – to fit the additional floor area allowed for buildings providing affordable senior housing or Inclusionary Housing, in areas that have been designated for it

Introduce a limit on the number of stories for buildings, to ensure that additional stories cannot be squeezed in within these heights

Allow buildings a few feet of room to set back from the sidewalk and provide garden areas in front of the building

Allow a spectrum of affordable senior housing and care facilities – ranging from independent living to State-licensed facilities like assisted living and nursing care – alone or in combination

Make parking optional for new affordable housing units in transit-accessible areas



In low-density districts that allow multifamily housing, key changes under the proposal would:

Allow a spectrum of affordable senior housing and care facilities, as described above

Modify zoning that today is designed to produce walkup buildings and allow affordable senior apartments to be built in a building served by an elevator, not exceeding four to six stories

Coordinated plan, targeted initiatives

The proposed changes are part of a set of coordinated initiatives under Housing New York:

They would align zoning regulations with the Housing New York goals of promoting affordability and livable neighborhoods

They are designed to work together with the proposed Mandatory Inclusionary Housing program, and to aid the effective use of City subsidies to create new affordable housing for New Yorkers at a range of low and moderate incomes

They will support the goals of current and future neighborhood planning initiatives

The proposed zoning changes are carefully targeted:

They would **not allow** any additional market-rate floor area, or encourage tear-downs

They would **not eliminate** any contextual zoning district, or re-map any zoning district

They would **not reduce or alter** the Landmarks Preservation Commission's oversight of landmarked buildings or historic districts

They would **not change** as-of-right residential rules in one- and two-family districts

They would **not reduce** the amount of green or open spaces required for buildings

They would **not produce** dramatic changes in development in any neighborhood