



## Downtown Brooklyn Parking Text Amendment - **Approved!**

### Update December 10, 2012:

On December 10, 2012 the City Council adopted the Downtown Brooklyn Parking Text Amendment. The zoning text and map changes are now in effect.  [View the adopted text amendment.](#)

### **Introduction**

The Department of City Planning (DCP) is proposing a zoning text amendment to modify the parking requirements for portions of the Special Downtown Brooklyn District. The proposal would reduce by half the amount of parking that new residential developments are required to provide to better reflect actual parking demand in Downtown Brooklyn, which features some of the best transit access in the city. It would also encourage affordable and mixed-income housing by eliminating parking requirements for affordable housing units. Finally, the proposed zoning text amendment would simplify the parking regulations in the Special Downtown Brooklyn District to provide more opportunities for additional public parking for use by residents, employees and visitors.



Study Area and Zoning

 [View a larger image](#)

Citing studies showing that many new residential accessory garages are half empty in the evenings, Downtown Brooklyn civic leaders and property owners have called for revising the parking regulations to better reflected the actual demand. The proposed changes were developed in consultation with these stakeholders community leaders and elected officials.

The proposal would apply throughout the high-density commercial districts throughout much of the Special Downtown Brooklyn District, which generally runs from Tillary Street to Atlantic Avenue, and from Clinton Street in Brooklyn Heights to Ashland Place adjacent to Fort Greene. However, it would not apply in exclusively residence districts and in the Atlantic Avenue sub-district. In addition, the proposal would not affect on-street parking.

Downtown Brooklyn is the city's third-largest central business district and a major transit hub served by seven subway stops, 13 subway lines, commuter rail and numerous buses. The area was rezoned to accommodate greater density in 2004, consistent with City Planning's goal of fostering transit-oriented growth and channeling new development to transit-rich areas. Dense, mixed-use neighborhoods with strong transit access, such as Downtown Brooklyn, generally enable residents and workers to travel by transit or on foot without the need to use a car and without the associated costs of car-ownership. While there is no requirement for community facility or commercial uses to provide parking in the Special Downtown Brooklyn District, current zoning requires parking for 40 percent of residential units in new development. The proposed changes to the parking rules in Downtown Brooklyn are intended to better match the requirements with the needs of residents, workers and visitors.

### **Proposed Zoning Text Amendment**

The proposal has three main components:

1. Reduce the minimum parking requirements for new residential developments from 40% of new housing units to 20% of new units to better reflect the low car-ownership and demand for parking in the new residential buildings.

A study sponsored by the Downtown Brooklyn Partnership found parking garages that were required by the zoning to serve new residential buildings were half empty in the evenings and weekends. The numbers in this study are consistent with Census Bureau data that shows that approximately 20% of Downtown Brooklyn's households own cars. Building excess parking adds to the cost of new developments, raising the cost of new housing. Therefore, DCP proposes to reduce the residential parking requirement to better match the actual need for parking of Downtown Brooklyn's residents.



Residential Development along Flatbush Avenue Extension in Downtown Brooklyn.

2. Encourage the development of mixed-income and affordable housing by eliminating parking requirements for affordable housing units.

Downtown Brooklyn's residents, elected officials and community groups are committed to encouraging the creation of more affordable housing in Downtown Brooklyn. One of the impediments to the development of affordable housing in Downtown Brooklyn is the high development cost of high-density areas. Census Bureau data show that lower income households have fewer cars than other households. In addition, affordable housing subsidy programs often cannot cover the high costs of building structured parking, and the costs of building parking cannot be easily recouped by increasing the rents of residents of affordable units, who are less able to pay a fee for parking than residents of market-rate housing. Therefore, DCP proposes eliminating the parking requirement for units meeting the definition of "affordable housing unit" in the [inclusionary housing program](#) and for other affordable units under programs defined in the Zoning Resolution.

3. Provide opportunities for the public to park throughout Downtown Brooklyn

The Downtown Brooklyn Partnership's survey of parking utilization in accessory and public parking garages shows that it is common practice in Downtown Brooklyn for a parking facility to be used by residents, visitors and workers. However, current zoning regulations restrict the daily or hourly use of [accessory](#) parking garages in some parts of Downtown Brooklyn only to residents of the building. Parking facilities in a vibrant district with a mix of commercial, community and public facilities, and residential uses work best for a community when they are public, and available to anyone. The proposed changes would provide more flexibility to locate required accessory parking off-site, to build small underground public garages in Downtown Brooklyn and to allow accessory parking garages to be available to all residents, workers and visitors in Downtown Brooklyn. Accordingly, the proposal would:

- Apply consistent rules across Downtown Brooklyn to allow accessory residential garages to be used by the public on an hourly or daily basis. This is the current rule in C6 zoning districts covering most of Downtown Brooklyn, and current practice across all of Downtown Brooklyn. The proposal would apply the C6 rules to C5 zoning districts, where non-resident parking is currently limited to weekly or monthly renters. This would allow for a more efficient use of parking resources.
- Allow a new building to locate its required parking off-site in a new public garage. This would ease development of sites over subway lines or with a high water table and would lower the cost of construction.
- Permitting underground [public parking garages as-of-right](#) up to 225 spaces across Downtown Brooklyn, as is currently allowed for accessory garages. Public parking is the most efficient parking in Downtown Brooklyn because it is available to all drivers. The proposed changes would simplify and standardize regulations to allow public parking to be built as needed.

Finally, the proposal provides new requirements to enhance the way parking garages function in the area. These include requiring reservoir spaces to keep cars from backing up into the street, and stop signs and speed bumps to improve safety for pedestrians. The proposal also updates regulations to include new types of parking garages, including stackers and automated garages.



[View the slide show presentation](#)

### **Public Review**

On June 4, 2012, the proposed Downtown Brooklyn Parking text amendment (N 120384 ZRK) was referred to Brooklyn Community Board 2 and the Brooklyn Borough President for a 60-day review period. On July 24, Community Board 2 approved the recommendations with conditions. On August 13, the Borough President approved the recommendations with conditions.

In response to comments from the Community Board and Borough President, On September 6, 2012 the Department of City Planning filed a revised application (N 120384 A ZRK) that modified the Department's original proposal to allow existing buildings to use the new parking requirements, and to allow off-site parking to be located within a half mile of a new building if both the building and the parking are within the Special Downtown Brooklyn District (instead of a quarter mile as is currently allowed). These two changes provide greater flexibility for existing buildings to convert underutilized parking to a more productive use, and would provide greater opportunities for shared parking facilities.

On September 19, 2012, the City Planning Commission held a public hearing on the original application and the revised application. On October 16, 2012, the original application (N 120384 ZRK) was withdrawn. On October 17, the City Planning Commission approved the proposed modified Downtown Brooklyn Parking text amendment (N 120384 A ZRK). [Read the CPC report](#). On December 10, 2012, the City Council approved the modified Downtown Brooklyn Parking text amendment and it is now in effect.

For more information, contact the Brooklyn Office of the Department of City Planning at (718) 780-8280.

## Related Notes

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-  Items accompanied by this symbol require the [free Adobe Acrobat Reader](#).
- Brief explanations of terms in *green italics* can be viewed by [visiting glossary page](#). Words and phrases followed by an asterisk (\*) are defined terms in the Zoning Resolution, primarily in Section 12-10. Consult the Zoning Resolution for the official and legally binding definitions of these words and phrases.