



Special St. George District Rezoning - **Approved!**

Overview

Update October 23, 2008:

On October 23, 2008 the City Council adopted the Special St. George District Rezoning. The zoning changes are now in effect.



On April 10, 2008, the Department of City Planning (DCP) presented its proposal for a St. George Special District at the St. George Theater on Staten Island. DCP, working with a broad spectrum of community stakeholders, neighborhood residents and local elected officials has developed a comprehensive planning and rezoning strategy to foster and frame future development in St. George, the transit hub and civic center of Staten Island.

The proposal has the following goals:

- to build upon St. George's existing strengths as a civic center, neighborhood and transit hub by providing rules that will bolster a thriving, pedestrian-friendly, business and residence district
- to establish zoning regulations that facilitate continuous ground floor retail and the critical mass needed to attract a broader mix of uses;
- to require a tall, slender, building form that reflects its hillside topography and maintains waterfront vistas;
- to encourage the reinvestment and reuse of vacant office buildings.
- to accommodate an appropriate level of off-street parking while reducing its visual impact

The department has committed to additional meetings with neighborhood civics, business groups and Community Board 1 to present and discuss this proposal in order to ensure public awareness and respond to questions and concerns.

 [View the St. George District Rezoning Plan Presentation.](#)

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Existing Zoning and Context

Background

Historically, St. George was one of Staten Island's main commercial hubs and became the borough's civic center with the opening of Borough Hall in 1907, followed by the St. George Public Library and the Richmond County Courthouse. It is the most densely developed neighborhood in Staten Island, with a mix of single-family homes and a large number of rental and owner-occupied apartment buildings. The neighborhood's easy access to Manhattan, via ferry, has made it a more attractive, lower-cost alternative for many commuters. However, as other parts of Staten Island have experienced commercial and residential growth of over the past several decades, investment in St. George and its neighboring communities on the North Shore have not kept pace, resulting in vacant office buildings throughout the area. Recently, the area has witnessed encouraging signs of reinvestment in new retail establishments and pockets of new development underway or completed on Bay Street, Central Avenue and along Richmond Terrace.

The entire civic/commercial area of St. George is zoned C4-2, a commercial district which also allows residential and community facility uses. In 2005, in response to inappropriate townhouse development in commercial districts throughout the borough, the Mayor's Growth Management Task Force recommended zoning text amendments that included interim rules for St. George and a commitment to review the area and propose appropriate long-term solutions. These interim rules were adopted by the city in December 2005 and mandated that any new buildings with residential uses must be constructed pursuant to the Quality Housing Program. The text amendment also prohibited residential uses on the ground floor and limited residential buildings heights to 70 feet. No building heights were set for commercial or community facility buildings. The C4-2 district covers the entire civic/commercial area of St. George and the ground-floor commercial/retail requirement may not be appropriate for all streets and may result in additional community facilities. These interim regulations have limited appropriate reinvestment in St. George.

Existing Land Use

The study area consists of a 12 block area in the heart of St. George comprised of 215 properties. St. George is located at the intersection of two main streets, Richmond Terrace and Bay Street, that serve as commercial and bus corridors providing access to North Shore communities from Mariner's Harbor and Port Richmond to Stapleton and Rosebank. St. George is also the main transportation hub of Staten Island providing easy access to:

- Manhattan via the Staten Island Ferry
- Tottenville on the South Shore and all 21 stations in between along the Staten Island Railway
- Destinations throughout the borough via 23 MTA bus lines.

There are several distinct areas within the proposed rezoning area. One area is the civic center with Borough Hall, the Courts, the New York Public Library, and City government buildings centered around Hyatt and Stuyvesant Streets. Another area consists of the waterfront condominium loft conversions on the waterfront east of Bay Street and adjacent to the ferry. On Bay Street, across from this area are large office buildings with retail uses on the ground floor. Upland and to the north are the largely residential areas located around Wall Street, and St. Marks Place characterized by large apartment buildings, vacant lots, and several multi-family wood frame homes. The western edge of the study area on Montgomery Avenue is characterized by one- and two-story residential, mixed use, and transportation use buildings. Finally, the commercial area of Victory Boulevard consists of four and five story walk-ups with ground floor retail.

The study area also includes Tompkinsville, the historic commercial area fronting Tompkinsville Park and a portion of Victory Boulevard. This area consists of four and five story residential walk-ups with ground floor retail. The Department of Parks and Recreation is in construction with the renovation of Tompkinsville Park. The park is framed by pedestrian-friendly retail shops, except for one prominent location across from the northern part of the park which is the site of a fast-food franchise and large parking lot which is out of context with its surroundings.



Existing Zoning Map

[View a larger image.](#)



Land Use Map

[View a larger image.](#)

St. George boasts several cultural and recreational institutions:

- Richmond County Ballpark, home to the Staten Island Yankees, is located on the waterfront adjacent to the Ferry terminal.
- Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences Museum is located on Stuyvesant Place and Wall Street.
- The St. George Theater, a 2,800 seat auditorium, is located on Hyatt Street.
- The future National Lighthouse Museum is located on the waterfront adjacent to the Ferry terminal.



Hyatt Street and Stuyvesant Place



Staten Island Borough Hall is located in St. George



Stuyvesant Place: mixed use residential and retail



Wall Street: topography slopes downs to New York Harbor

Existing Zoning:

The proposed special district generally coincides with an existing C4-2 district in St. George and is roughly bounded by Hamilton Avenue on the north Richmond Terrace on the east, Victory Boulevard on the south and Montgomery Avenue on the west. The rezoning area also includes an area between Victory Boulevard, Van Duzer and Bay Streets that is zoned R3-2 with a C1-2 zoning overlay. [View the zoning comparison chart.](#)

C4-2

The C4-2 zoning district allows a variety of uses including commercial, community facility and residential. C4 districts are mapped in regional commercial centers and serve a larger area than neighborhood shopping areas. Pursuant to the "interim" regulations adopted in 2005, the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) for a C4-2 zoning district varies by use and the width of the street. On narrow streets the Residential FAR is 2.2. On wide streets the Residential FAR is 3.0. The Community Facility FAR is 4.8 and the Commercial FAR is 3.4, regardless of the street width. Parking

requirements for the commercial uses are 1 space per 300 square foot of floor area. Parking requirements for residential uses are 50% of dwelling units on narrow streets and 70% of units on wide streets.

Most Residential and Commercial districts in Staten Island were designated a Lower Density Growth Management Area (LDGMA) in August 2004 and specific LDGMA rules for commercial areas were adopted in December 2005 to prohibit inappropriate townhouse development in commercially zoned areas. The zoning regulations for St. George were not intended to be permanent and were adopted with a commitment to review the zoning regulations as they applied in St. George. The text amendments mandated that new buildings containing residential use be developed pursuant to the [Quality Housing Program](#). In addition, the regulations prohibited residential uses on the ground floor and set overall height limits of 55 feet on narrow streets and 70 feet on wide streets. Commercial and community facility buildings do not have a height limit, but are subject to the [sky exposure plane](#).

In addition, the Waterfront Zoning provisions apply to that portion of the C4-2 district located along the waterfront. These rules supersede the LDGMA rules and have different use, bulk and height regulations.

R3-2 with a C1-2 zoning overlay

The R3-2/C1-2 zoning allows a variety of uses including commercial, community facility and residential. Residential buildings have a maximum FAR of .6 and commercial uses have a maximum FAR of 1.0 Residential and mixed use buildings are permitted to have a maximum perimeter wall height of 26 feet and a peak height of 35 feet. Commercial buildings are permitted to be 30 feet tall or two stories for most retail uses. Parking requirements for commercial uses are one space per 300 square foot for most uses. Parking requirements for residential uses are 100% or one space per dwelling unit. Parking is allowed to be waived for small zoning lots.

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Proposed Actions

Proposed Actions

Creation of the Special St. George District

A zoning text amendment is proposed to create the Special St. George District (SSGD). The Special St. George district addresses the specific and unique challenges of the neighborhood with additional rules and protections that cannot be addressed by a zoning change, including:

- New rules that bolster and support today's pedestrian-friendly shopping streets by encouraging continuous retail frontage on these streets, are requiring wider sidewalks and more windows to make shopping streets more attractive.
- The re-use of existing vacant office buildings by allowing them to easily convert to residential uses.
- Allowing taller, slender buildings that maintain waterfront vistas from the harbor and from the upland community are more appropriate for this unique hillside, waterfront community.
- Appropriate off-street parking requirements.



St. George Boundary Map

[View a larger image.](#)

[View the complete proposed zoning text amendment.](#)

[View the text amendment adopted on October 23, 2008.](#)

Retail/Streetscape Rules

Retail/Streetscape

The Special St. George District will bolster and support pedestrian-friendly shopping streets by encouraging retail streets to grow throughout St George. These regulations include mandating wider sidewalks for new development, requiring ground-floor retail where appropriate.

- **Retail/Commercial Streets**
Certain streets within the Special St. George District would be designated as "Commercial Streets". Ground floor retail or commercial uses would be required on these streets to promote retail continuity on these important corridors. Throughout the rest of the district retail/commercial uses would be optional.
- **Glazing/Transparency Requirements**
Building facades without windows create a sterile, uninviting environment. The Special St. George District would require ground floor commercial or community uses, anywhere in the district, to have 50% of their facades to be transparent, measured to a height of 10 feet.



Commercial Streets

[View a larger image.](#)

- **Wider Sidewalks**

In order to provide ample room for pedestrians, shoppers and future sidewalk amenities as outdoor cafes and street trees, new construction must provide at least 12 feet between the buildings and curb for sidewalk use. Approximately 75% of the study area already has sidewalks of at least 12 feet. This will require in some cases that new buildings will be set back from the mapped street line. New development will also be required to provide street trees. will be set back from the mapped street line. New development will also be required to provide street trees.

- **Street Wall Location**

Buildings that are setback from the street with parking lots in front do not create a pleasing pedestrian retail experience and would be inappropriate for St. George. The proposal would require on Commercial Streets that 70% of a building's façade be located within 8 feet of the sidewalk to promote a more pedestrian-friendly retail environment. In the rest of the special district, 50% of a building's facade must be located within 8 feet of the sidewalk. The proposal would also prohibit open parking lots between the sidewalk and the front of a building.

Office Conversion Rules

The Special St. George District will encourage the re-use of existing vacant office buildings by allowing them to easily convert to residential uses

Older office buildings in St. George cannot convert to residential use if they do not comply with residential FAR and yard requirements. In parts of lower Manhattan, Downtown Brooklyn and Long Island City proposed conversions are allowed to waive certain zoning regulations that make it easier to convert buildings to residential. The St. George Special District would allow office buildings built in 1971 or earlier to use these same Loft Conversion rules.

However, unlike other areas in the city, conversions to residential in St. George would be required to meet residential parking requirements. In order to accommodate the required parking for these existing buildings, off-site parking will be allowed anywhere within the special district.

Building Form

Another goal of The Special St. George District is to ensure that as St George grows, that new buildings are appropriate to this unique hillside, waterfront community.

- **Floor Area Ratio (FAR)**

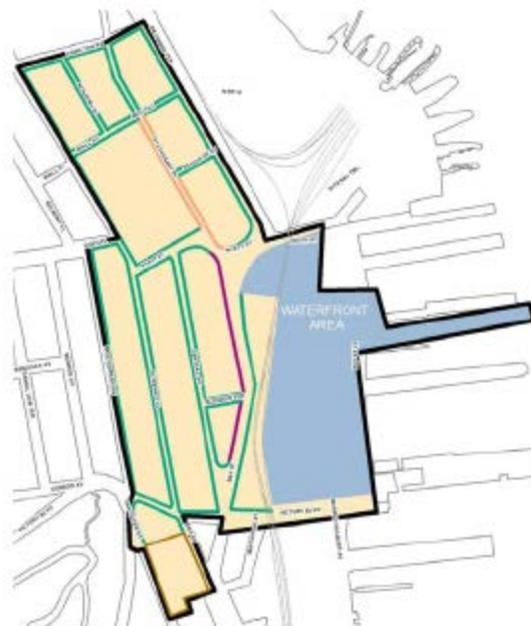
The proposed Special St. George District would equalize and limit the maximum FAR to 3.4 for all uses. The district would retain a 2.2 FAR for zoning lots under 10,000 sq. ft. on non-commercial streets to encourage better site planning on small sites. The FAR of the R3-2/C1-2 portion of the Special District would remain the same.

- **Base Heights**

Base heights refer to that portion of a building that is located along the sidewalk. Buildings with base heights that are too low or too high create unwelcoming pedestrian environments at street level. The proposal will require on most streets, including Victory Blvd, a 30 - 60 ft high street wall base. On Stuyvesant Place, which is a very narrow street, a lower base height of 30 – 40 ft will allow sufficient light and air to reach the street. Bay Street is already populated with taller buildings along the sidewalk, and future buildings should be in context with them, thus a higher base height of 60 – 85 ft will be required. The building envelopes of the R3-2/C1-2 portion of the SSGD would not be affected by the proposed base height requirements. See Map Base Heights.

Proposal

- ▶ **Stuyvesant Place** will require a building base of 30 – 40 ft in height to allow sufficient light and air to reach the street.
- ▶ **Victory Blvd and most streets** will require a 30 - 60 ft high base.
- ▶ **Bay Street** will require a 60 – 85 ft high base.
- ▶ **Waterfront area** subject to waterfront zoning, requiring a 65 ft base height.
- ▶ **R3-2/C1-2 area** retains existing residential envelope of 26' wall and 35 peak



- **Towers**

Towers can only be accommodated on large sites with enough floor area to meet requirements for base and a tower. On large sites with more available floor area, after meeting the base height requirements noted above, any remaining FAR could be used for a slender tower. All towers would be required to be set back between 10' and 15' from the base depending upon the width of the street.

In order to provide a transition area between the Special District and adjacent lower density residential buildings, a Tower Exclusion Area will be designated along portions of St. Marks Place and Montgomery Place, which would limit buildings in those areas to 70 feet.

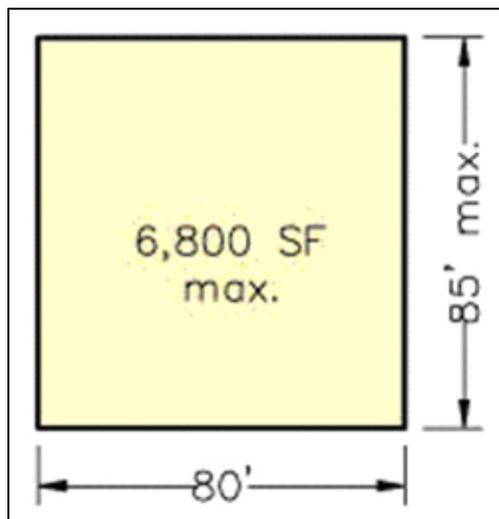


Tower Exclusion Zone in Red

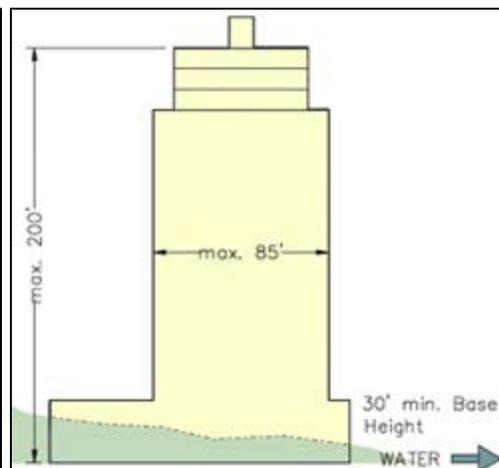
Two types of slender towers would be permitted, Point and Broad, each with additional rules for their building forms, as noted below. All towers must have their narrow portion facing the water and have a width of no more than 80' in order to protect views from the harbor and the upland areas of St. George. To encourage a building design that reflects the existing hillside topography the tops of buildings would be required to provide articulation.

Point Towers

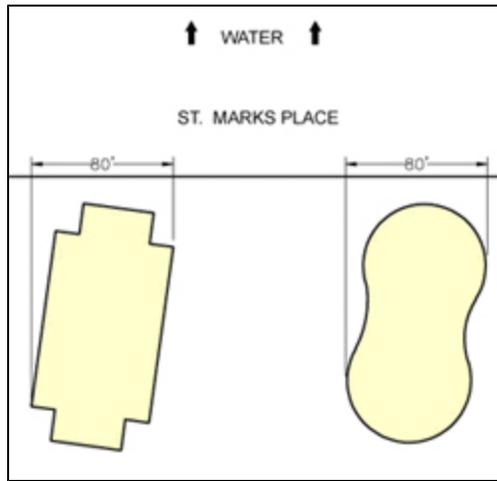
- Maximum FAR - 3.4
- Maximum Floor Plate - 6,800 sq ft
- Maximum Width facing water – 80ft
- Maximum Overall Depth - 85 ft
- Control to articulate building top: The lot coverage of the top 3 floors will be required to have a minimum coverage of 50% of the floors below, but cannot exceed 80% of the floor below.



Point Towers have a maximum floor plate of 6,800 sq. ft.



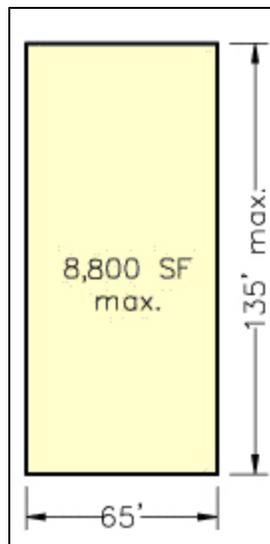
Point Tower with three top floor setbacks



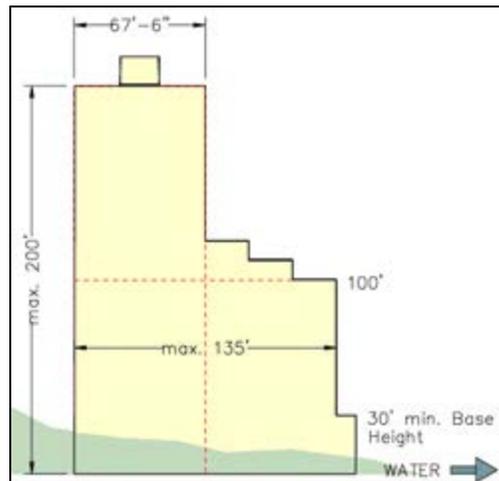
The maximum width facing the water is 80' in order to preserve views

Broad Towers

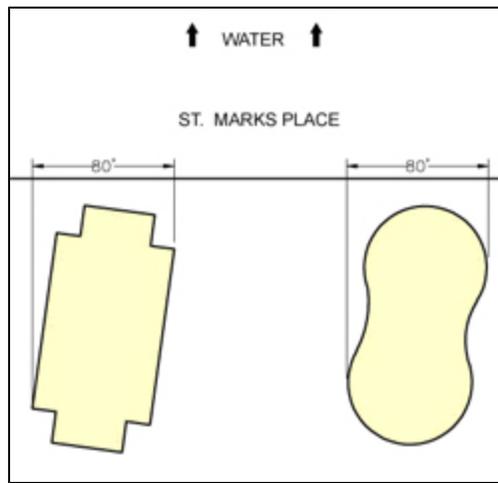
- Maximum FAR 3.4
- Maximum Floor Plate - 8,800 sq ft
- Maximum Width facing Water – 80 ft
- Maximum Overall Depth -135 ft
- Controls to articulate building top: Three setbacks facing the water will be required above a height of 100 feet. The top story must be located on the uphill side, so that the building terraces face down towards the water.



Broad towers have a maximum floor plate of 8,800 sq. ft.



Broad Tower with three setbacks facing the water



The maximum width facing the water is 80' to preserve views

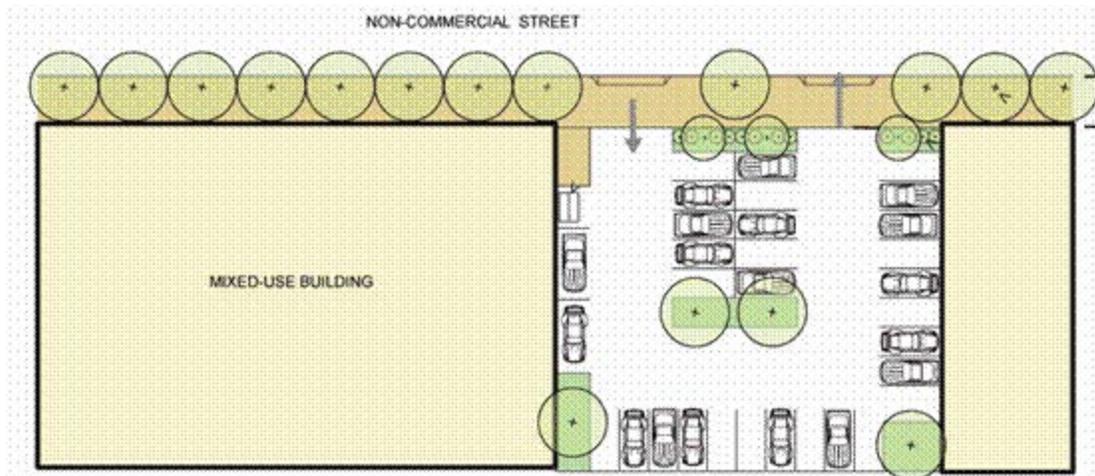
PARKING REGULATIONS

The Special St. George District includes parking regulations to assure adequate and visually pleasing off-street parking and encourage new retail development. These regulations include:

- Not considering parking in structures as floor area if it is not visible from the street
- At least 40% of parking garage rooftops must be landscaped.
- All parking lots for new Commercial and Community Facility uses are now subject to the design regulations made part of the Zoning Resolution in November 2007. The Special District would make these rules applicable to residential parking lots.
- On the designated Commercial Streets, open parking lots would be prohibited in order to encourage continuous ground-floor retail/commercial opportunities.
- On non-commercial streets, open parking lots would not be permitted in front of buildings – only to the side or rear of the building. To encourage new retail development, the special district would reduce the commercial parking requirement to one parking space for every 400 sq. ft. of commercial use. Parking will not be necessary for stores under 10,000 sq. ft.
- Current parking requirements for residential uses are too low. The proposed Special District would increase the residential requirement to one space per dwelling unit. Additionally, the proposal would prohibit the subdivision of zoning lots to waive residential parking requirements.
- To prevent new curb cuts from conflicting with pedestrian-friendly retail streets, new driveways would only be allowed on the mapped Commercial streets by certification by (either the Chair or the Commission) that all other alternatives have been explored.



Parking garages would not be visible from street except for entrances and exits.



Open parking lots would be to the side or rear of a building on non-commercial streets.

Zoning Map Amendment

In addition to mapping the Special St. George District, the proposed zoning map amendment will also change the zoning of a portion of block 498 roughly bounded by Victory Boulevard, Van Duzer Street and Hannah Street from R3-2/C1-2 to C4-2 and include it as part of the SSGD district. This would encourage new construction that would provide a continuous retail/commercial presence along the sidewalk in context with the existing retail presence fronting Tompkinsville Park and the goals of the zoning proposal.

Special St. George District Rezoning - **Approved!**

Public Review

On May 19, 2008 the Department of City Planning certified the Uniform Land Use Review ([ULURP](#)) application (C 080426 ZMR) and referred the related text change application (N 0800425 ZRR) for the St. George rezoning to begin the formal public review process.

Milestone	Date
Department of City Planning Certification	May 19, 2008
Community Board 1 Approval	June 10, 2008
Staten Island Borough President Approval	June 25, 2008
City Planning Commission Public Hearing	July 23, 2008
City Planning Commission Approval (with modifications*) Read the CPC reports.	September 10, 2008
City Council Approval	October 23, 2008

*CPC Modifications

On September 10, 2008, the City Planning Commission approved the actions with the following modifications to the Special St. George District: additional landscaping requirements have been added to the proposal in order to ensure that there are not wide areas of hard surface between the sidewalk and a residential building that is set back from the street line. Specifically, the area of the zoning lot between the street wall and the street line (or sidewalk widening line) of a building will be required to be planted where the ground floor use is residential, except for entrances and exits. Commercial uses fronting on the street will be exempt from this requirement.

Also, in order to ensure that the tops of point towers are articulated on all sides so they are read as "towers-in-the-round", the text was modified to require setbacks on each side of a point tower, in a manner that maintains design flexibility. Under the current proposal, tower top articulation can be achieved by a single setback on only one side of the tower.

The original proposal allowed a base height of 30-60 ft in most of the district. The text was modified to require a base height of 30-40 ft for developments that include a tower. The proposed Bay Street base heights will remain the same at 60-85 ft to reflect the context of that particular street. A taller base height will be permitted for those projects that do not include a tower. This modification will allow additional light, air and potential waterfront views at the street level due to the unique topography in St. George.

For more information, please contact the Department's Staten Island Office at 718-556-7240

Related Notes

-  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.