



BROOKLYN

Community Board 5

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Borough President: Honorable Antonio Reynoso
Board Chairwoman: Alice Lowman
District Manager: Melinda Perkins

July 18th, 2024

RESOLUTION: NYC Department of City Planning City of Yes Text Amendments for Housing Opportunity – ULURP Number: N240290ZRY

Whereas, the NYC Department of City Planning (DCP) is proposing, under the City of Yes for Housing Opportunity (COY HO), a citywide zoning text amendment to expand opportunities for housing within all zoning districts, and across all 59 of the City’s Community Districts. These changes to the City’s Zoning Resolution propose to enable more housing and a wider variety of housing types in every neighborhood, from the lowest-density districts to the highest, to address the housing shortage and high cost of housing in New York City.

Whereas, the COY HO text amendment proposal encompasses the following eight (8) summarized components:

1. **Universal Affordability Preference:** Proposes allowing buildings to add at least 20% more housing if the additional homes are affordable, delivering affordable housing to high-cost neighborhoods.
2. **Convert Offices and Other Buildings to Housing:** Proposes to make it easier for vacant offices and other nonresidential buildings to become much-needed homes.
3. **Town Center Zoning:** Legalize housing above businesses in low-density areas.
4. **Remove Costly Parking Mandates:** Proposes to reduce housing costs by making parking optional in new buildings.
5. **Accessory Dwelling Units:** Proposes to allow backyard cottages, garage conversions, and basement apartments, giving homeowners extra cash and providing space for multi-generational families.
6. **Transit-Oriented Development:** Proposes to legalize 3-5 story apartment buildings on qualifying sites near public transit in low-density areas.
7. **Campuses:** Proposes to make it easier for campuses like churches to add new buildings, bringing money for repairs, new facilities, and housing.
8. **Small and Shared Housing:** Proposes to lift restrictions on homes with shared kitchens or other facilities.

Whereas, the New York City Department of City Planning (DCP) presented the proposed City of Yes for Housing Opportunity (COY HO) Text Amendment to the Brooklyn, Community Board 5 (CB5) Land Use & Housing Committee on May 16th, 2024, and subsequently presented at a CB5 Public Hearing on June 28th, 2024, where a quorum of Board Members voted on the COY HO amendment.

Whereas, CB5 voted against the COY HO Text Amendment. Here are some of the accompanying reasons outlined below:

- Overall, the City of Yes for Housing Opportunity text amendment proposes to create avenues of access for housing and levels of affordable housing. However, the following summarized concerns prevent Brooklyn, Community Board 5 from supporting the text amendment as it is currently written:
 - Lack of clarity on how affordability formulas will incorporate Neighborhood Median Incomes to avoid displacement under existing AMIs
 - District Infrastructure must be assessed to determine feasibility of support for newer housing, specifically in current non-residential zones/areas.
 - No inclusion of dedicated funding for additional resources and services to support the population increase. Comprehensive housing plans address more than just affordability – they should also include:
 - Access to healthy foods; educational institutions/services; mental health resources; new hospital construction and/or upgrades to existing medical facilities, etc.
- Universal Affordability Preference raises concerns due to its uncertain approach in allocating additional housing units that should benefit the residents of Brooklyn, Community Board 5 (CB5). Affordability formulas must be based on Neighborhood Median Incomes to avoid the potential displacement or oversights created by the current AMI levels. Furthermore, the current supportive housing policies in New York City are designated for specific groups, such as those with varying mental health issues, substance use disorders, and other serious medical conditions, as well as unhoused individuals. In CB5, it is a matter of over-saturation of certain units within that category, i.e. those transitioning into independent living from mental wellness institutions. Therefore, we propose that any future supportive housing policies be re-evaluated and broadened to include a wider range of financially vulnerable groups, particularly 'Returning Citizens.' This category would include a diverse group of individuals reintegrating into their original communities. Within this group, newly graduated college students would be encouraged to return to their neighborhoods with the incentive of affordable, quality housing - thereby enhancing the local college-educated population and contributing their newfound skills to the community – not in shared living spaces, but affordable units that allow them to begin to plant themselves back into the community where they were reared. Furthermore, this category should also embrace specific classifications of formerly incarcerated populations, prioritizing criteria that facilitate meaningful employment, financial literacy and assistance, as well as comprehensive support services provided on-site by reputable non-profit organizations skilled in these domains.

- Converting Non-Residential Buildings to Housing presents no assurance of maintaining genuine affordability for the proposed residential spaces. There are also concerns about potential issues due to limits on district infrastructure and residential adaptations in areas that were not initially created to support that environment.
- Town Center Zoning within Community Board 5 (CB5) bypasses the existing need to address current conditions with ground-floor commercial spaces. These spaces often remain vacant for extended periods due to a lack of compelling incentives for quality businesses to establish themselves in the area. High commercial rents further exacerbate the issue, creating barriers to entry for local business owners and entrepreneurs who are interested in opening physical storefronts. As a result, the variety of business is limited, with a tendency towards establishments like smoke shops and dollar stores, which do not contribute to the sustainable and healthy lifestyle desired by the community members. In terms of access to fresh food, CB5 faces significant challenges. Reports indicate that Central Brooklyn, which includes CB5, are two of the most severe "food deserts" in New York City. Access to affordable, healthy food options, particularly fresh fruits and vegetables, is severely limited or non-existent in these neighborhoods. Therefore, greater incentives for fresh food and healthy living options, in addition to guarantees of permanently affordable housing must be included in the language of the Town Center zoning model.
- The Removal of Parking Mandates for new developments is designed to benefit development companies over community members. Parking is not an amenity in our neighborhoods, it is a necessity. It is a resource that adds tremendous value to new housing units. Therefore, the decision to include parking should not be at the developers' discretion. Community Board 5 has witnessed a significant population surge over the last decade, with an extraordinary 17.8% growth from 2021 to 2022 alone, culminating in a population exceeding 200,000 across the zip codes of 11207, 11208, and 11239. This demographic boom is directly linked to new housing projects, and with an additional 4,000 homes anticipated to be finalized in six years (<https://www.innovativeurbanvillage.com/> & <https://lmdevpartners.com/projects/alafia/>), the removal of parking is a real detriment to the needs of the burgeoning families and individuals who will populate CB5.

Emphasis was also made for the following points of concern/interest:

- The need to prioritize and protect open areas and green spaces, which may be jeopardized in the Campus Infill option.
- Provide protections, education, and financial supports for homeowners wishing to take advantage of an ADU model on their property

- Protect existing Landmark sites and laws to avoid diminishing the value of landmark status

For these reasons and other concerns highlighted by Board Members and residents of the district, Brooklyn, Community Board 5 voted against the City of Yes for Housing Opportunity Text Amendment – with the following vote tally:

Vote Tally: Members Present: 25 In Favor: 0 Against: 24 Abstain: 1

Therefore, be it Resolved, Brooklyn, Community Board 5 voted against the City of Yes for Housing Opportunity Text Amendment.

Sincerely,



Melinda Perkins
District Manager
Brooklyn, Community Board 5

cc: Alice Lowman, Board Chairwoman - Brooklyn, Community Board 5
NYC Council Member, Sandy Nurse – 37th CD
NYC Council Member, Chris Banks – 42nd CD