

# WHAT IS ZONING + CITY COUNCIL'S ROLE?

## ZONING OVERVIEW

**Zoning is the classification of land through restrictions placed on its use (land use) and development.**

Zoning governs the size and use of buildings and deeply affects how the City looks and operates. The effects of zoning can be seen and felt everywhere, from our homes and workspaces, to our streets, parks and public spaces, and across entire neighborhoods. Zoning affects everything from the materials that our homes are made out of, to the trees and furniture we see on the street, to the proximity of our homes to industrial uses, and the way the city and its neighborhoods are organized. Many areas of life are impacted by zoning, including: public and environmental health, transportation, housing, and education.

In history, zoning has a close relationship to the practice of 'redlining,' where local governments legally enforced housing segregation through exclusionary zoning laws like single-family zoning. Today, zoning still has a massive impact on racial equity in cities. Some examples that you may encounter include the burden on certain neighborhoods to provide affordable housing over others, and the siting of public facilities and parks versus toxic and industrial uses, and more.

## THE COUNCIL MEMBER'S ROLE

Zoning changes must undergo a process in New York City called Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP). During this process, the Council Member should work with the local Community Board, Borough President, and the Department of City Planning to ensure that all proposed development and rehabilitation projects, as well as planning efforts, are responsive to the needs of the community. The Council Member should carefully consider the full life of the project, including:

-  Period of construction and standards for maintaining quality environmental controls;
-  Project architecture and design, neighborhood character, open space, and amenities;
-  Long-term environmental impact and provision of infrastructure to support the development; and
-  Socio-economic impacts including quality affordable housing, local hiring, and economic development.

## WHAT DOES ZONING DO?

- Regulate districts
- Regulate use groups
- Regulate building density/form
- Regulate the amount of open space and parking requirements
- Generate Air Rights (Transferable Development Rights)

## WHAT DO ZONINGS NOT DO?

- Regulate properties controlled by state or federal agencies
- Regulate construction techniques or architectural style, except in specific cases
- Apply zoning laws to grandfathered sites (properties exempt from current regulations)

## HOW ARE REZONINGS APPROVED?

After approval from the City Planning Commission (CPC) of a ULURP application, Council Members vote to:

-  **Approve**
-  **Approve with modifications**
-  **Disapprove**

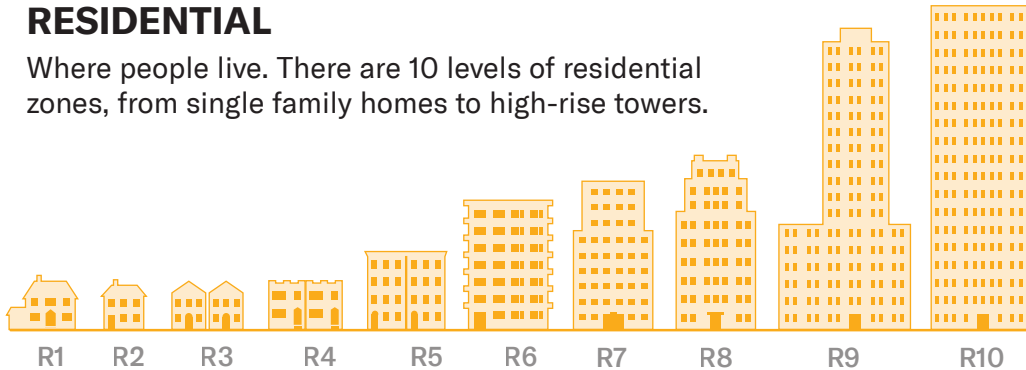
The Mayor may then veto the Council action, and City Council may **override the veto by 2/3 vote**

# COMMON ZONING TERMS

## ZONING CATEGORIES

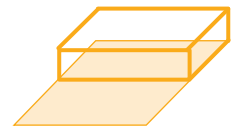
### RESIDENTIAL

Where people live. There are 10 levels of residential zones, from single family homes to high-rise towers.



### FAR: Floor Area Ratio

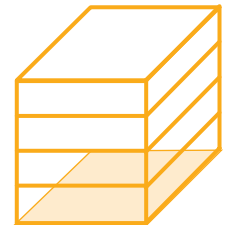
Allowable FAR is the total sq. footage of a building divided by the sq. footage of the lot it's on. The higher the a lot's FAR, the more you can build on it.



$$\frac{2500 \text{ sf bldg}}{5000 \text{ sf lot}} = .5 \text{ FAR}$$

### COMMERCIAL

Where people work and buy or sell goods. There are 8 types of commercial zones. The number determines the types of businesses allowed.



$$\frac{20000 \text{ sf bldg}}{5000 \text{ sf lot}} = 4 \text{ FAR}$$

### MANUFACTURING

Where activities that make noise, create traffic or emit pollution can happen. There are 3 types of manufacturing zones that range from light to heavy industrial uses.



Infographics adapted from MCB11's "The People's guide to East Harlem's Rezoning"

## R7A

A district's first letter and number combination are often accompanied by a suffix. When the suffix is a letter, it relates to contextual quality housing regulations. Higher maximum FAR and heights are available for buildings participating in the Inclusionary Housing Program or that provide certain senior facilities.

### SPECIAL PURPOSE DISTRICTS + OVERLAYS

Special purpose districts follow basic zoning and include additional rules to protect unique features such as historical or cultural significance, waterfront usage, commercial centers, etc. Overlays allow for areas to be mixed use, combining residential areas with commercial amenities.