



## **Resiliency and sustainability - Can Long Island follow New York City's lead?**

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Long Island municipalities should consider following several important zoning, land use and building initiatives underway in New York City. These policy initiatives, implemented primarily through amendments to the New York City Zoning Resolution, include the adoption of flood and storm resilience zoning amendments, green zoning initiatives, new regulations for off-street parking and a comprehensive waterfront revitalization plan.

First, let's consider flood and storm resilience zoning amendments. The Department of City Planning is proposing zoning text amendments throughout designated flood zones. These amendments are designed to remove barriers to the reconstruction of storm damaged properties. They are also designed to enact new standards to reduce vulnerability to future floods and storm damage, and avoid higher flood insurance premiums, especially given the likelihood of more climate-related events. One important proposal includes a modification to the level at which building height is measured. Instead of measuring building height from adjacent grade level or curb level, building height will be measured from the new Flood Resistant Construction Elevation (FRCE), which includes the new FEMA flood elevation plus a freeboard requirement of 1 to 3 feet. This will facilitate the raising of structures without running afoul of the height restrictions in the New York City Zoning Resolution. Other key proposals include new provisions to allow mechanical equipment to be located in rear yards as a permitted obstruction at or above grade, or allow space within buildings above the FRCE dedicated to the storage of mechanical equipment to be exempt from floor area calculations.

Equally compelling are the green initiatives. These are proposed in order to create a sustainable city, with improved quality of life and a better environment. Here again, City Planning is acting based on the Bloomberg Administration's plans. Included are standards for greener parking lots with more perimeter screening and landscaping, less paving in front yards, new street tree initiatives and measures to enhance streetscapes. In addition, new provisions in the NYC Zoning Resolution encourage green roofs by exempting such roofs from height restrictions, and promote energy-efficient building walls, by exempting up to eight inches of wall thickness (where the wall is greater than eight inches thick) from the calculation of floor area.

In terms of parking for both residential and commercial uses, the recent Manhattan Core Text Amendment seeks to revise zoning regulations governing off-street parking in parts of Manhattan, which will encourage public transit and reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, while maintaining limited parking for Manhattan businesses, residents and visitors. While the opposite problem, lack of sufficient parking, is typically the issue on Long Island, certain aspects of the amendment can apply on Long Island. For example, the amendment encourages the use of automated parking garages. These parking facilities do not require ramps, can hold many more cars

than conventional attendant parking facilities, are more efficiently run since cars are retrieved quicker, and eliminate accidents, dents, and dings which are common-place in attendant parking facilities where humans park cars, and limit exhaust fumes from idling cars. Such facilities may make sense in the more densely developed areas on Long Island and around malls and other retail or commercial centers.

New York City and Long Island have a key factor in common; they are both surrounded by water. New York City, through Vision 2020, has put forward a long-term plan to revitalize and stimulate the waterfront and waterways. This plan provides a framework for more water transport, increased public access to the waterfront and economic opportunities that will help make the water an integral part of New Yorkers' everyday lives. Notably, Glen Cove is implementing a ferry service from its waterfront for transport to New York City.

Can New York City's initiatives work on Long Island? The answer is of course, yes. The fact that Long Island has a multitude of jurisdictions, cities, towns and villages, is not an impediment to enacting these initiatives. To the contrary, it is a benefit. Not every Long Island municipality has the same requirements. For instance, a village in the middle of Nassau County does not need to be concerned with storm-surge flooding or waterfront redevelopment. However, it might want to borrow other resiliency concepts for the type of storms or climate related events that village is prone to suffer, such as tree damage to infrastructure. The same holds true for off street parking amendments. Villages with primarily residential development do not have to be concerned with parking for business uses.

What is important, though, is that the resiliency and sustainability proposals get onto the front page of all municipal officials and planners. That way, they can select which measures require their focus. All this is an essential part of comprehensive planning. By statute, municipalities on Long Island do not need a specific master plan document, but they do need to engage in comprehensive planning. So, these are measures that warrant attention from both a policy and a legal perspective.

We cannot talk about comprehensive planning and sustainability, without discussing another major debate underway in New York City; the future of housing. This debate is equally as important on Long Island. New York City is growing. Recent reports project that the population growth could add one million new New York City residents by 2040. To accommodate these residents, several proposals are being considered to create new residential housing stock or stimulate the growth and redevelopment of existing residential housing stock. These proposals must fit within the city's existing built environment and infrastructure, school system, and transportation system, and the city's need to preserve open space.

On Long Island, the issue is slow or stagnant overall growth, changing demographics, the continued need to retain the youth trained and educated on Long Island, and yet still retain Long Island's residential character, even if not in the Levittown model of subdivision development. Here is where government, the private sector and the major not-for-profit organizations and entities on Long Island need to partner, come up with a plan, and implement it now. If the city can identify needs for 2040, so can we on Long Island.

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