Zoning Resolution

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
Zohran K. Mamdani, Mayor

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
Sideya Sherman, Chair

81-633 - Special permit for Grand Central public realm improvements

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For #developments# and #enlargements# on #zoning lots# located within the Vanderbilt Corridor Subarea, as shown on Map 2 (East Midtown Subdistrict and Subareas) in Appendix A of this Chapter, the City Planning Commission may allow, by special permit, #floor area# in excess of the basic maximum #floor area ratio# established in the table in Section 81-63 (Special Floor Area Provisions for the Vanderbilt Corridor Subarea), up to the maximum #floor area# set forth in the table, in accordance with the provisions of this Section.

All applications for a special permit for additional #floor area# pursuant to this Section shall include on-site or off-site, above- or below-grade improvements to the pedestrian or mass transit circulation network, or a combination thereof, in the Grand Central Core Area, as shown on Map 2. In addition, requirements pertaining to the ground floor level, building design and sustainable design measures are set forth in this Section in order to ensure that any #development# or #enlargement# receiving additional #floor area# constitutes an exceptional addition to the #Special Midtown District#.

To approve a special permit application for additional #floor area#, the Commission shall determine that such #development# or #enlargement# complies with the conditions and application requirements of paragraph (a), the findings of paragraph (b) and the additional requirements of paragraph (c) of this Section.

(a) Conditions and application requirements

All applications for a special permit for additional #floor area# pursuant to this Section shall include the following:

(1) Above- or below-grade improvements to the pedestrian or mass transit circulation network.

In order to ensure that the proposed #development# or #enlargement# contributes to the improvement of pedestrian and mass transit circulation in the Grand Central Core Area, especially in the vicinity of Grand Central Terminal, any #development# or #enlargement# proposed under the provisions of this Section shall include above- or below-grade public realm improvements.

(i) Where a #development# or #enlargement# proposes the inclusion of above-grade public realm improvements, such improvements may consist of on-site or off-site improvements to the pedestrian circulation network, or a combination thereof.

On-site, above-grade public realm improvements shall consist of open or enclosed publicly accessible spaces, of ample size, provided for public use and enjoyment. Such publicly accessible spaces shall include amenities characteristic of #public plazas# or public atriums, as applicable, and include amenities for the comfort and convenience of the public.

Off-site, above-grade public realm improvements shall consist of major improvements to the public right-of-way that support pedestrian circulation in the areas surrounding Grand Central Terminal. Where the area of such improvements is to be established as a pedestrian plaza, such improvements shall be characteristic of best practices in plaza design, as set forth by the Department of Transportation. Where the area of such improvements is along a #street# accommodating both vehicular and pedestrian access, such improvements shall be characteristic of current best practices in #street#

design, as set forth by the Department of Transportation, and include improvements to the right-of-way such as pedestrian amenities, or streetscape, sidewalk, crosswalk and median enhancements.

(ii) Where a #development# or #enlargement# proposes the inclusion of below-grade public realm improvements, such improvements shall consist of on-site or off-site enhancements to the below-grade pedestrian and mass transit circulation network. Such improvements shall be characteristic of current best practice in mass-transit network design, and shall include improvements such as on-site or off-site widening, straightening, expanding or otherwise enhancing the existing below-grade pedestrian circulation network, additional vertical circulation, reconfiguring circulation routes to provide more direct pedestrian connections to subway or rail mass transit facilities, or providing daylight access, retail #uses#, or enhancements to noise abatement, air quality, lighting, finishes or rider orientation in new or existing passageways.

Applications shall include information and justification sufficient to provide the Commission with the basis for evaluating the benefits to the general public; determining the appropriate amount of bonus #floor area# to grant; and determining whether the applicable findings set forth in paragraph (b) of this Section have been met. Such application materials shall also include initial plans for the maintenance of the proposed improvements.

Where the Metropolitan Transportation Authority or any other City or State agency has control and responsibility for the area of a proposed improvement, the applicant shall submit concept plans for the proposed improvement to such agency and the Commission. At the time of certification of the application, any such agency with control and responsibility for the area of the proposed improvement shall each provide a letter to the Commission containing a conceptual approval of the

improvement, including a statement of any considerations regarding the construction and operation of the improvement.

(2) Ground floor level

In order to ensure that the proposed #development# or #enlargement# contributes to the improvement of the pedestrian circulation network in the surrounding area, any #development# or #enlargement# proposed under the provisions of this Section shall provide enhancements to the ground floor level of the #building#, including, but not limited to, sidewalk widenings, streetscape amenities or enhancements to required pedestrian circulation spaces.

Where a #development# or #enlargement# includes #street# frontage along Madison Avenue or a #narrow street# between East 43rd Street and East 47th Street, sidewalk widenings shall be provided as follows:

(i) where a #development# or #enlargement# is on a #zoning lot# which occupies the entire #block# frontage along Madison Avenue, a sidewalk widening shall be provided along Madison Avenue, to the extent necessary, so that a minimum sidewalk width of 20 feet is achieved, including portions within and beyond the #zoning lot#. However, no sidewalk widening need exceed 10 feet, as measured perpendicular to the #street line#;

(ii) where a #development# or #enlargement# is on a #zoning lot# that does not occupy the entire #block# frontage along Madison Avenue, a sidewalk widening shall be provided along Madison Avenue where all existing #buildings# on the #block# frontage have provided such a widening. Such required widening shall match the amount of widened sidewalk provided on

adjacent #zoning lots#, provided that no sidewalk widening need exceed 10 feet, as measured perpendicular to the #street line#; or

(iii) where a #development# or #enlargement# with frontage on a #narrow street# between East 43rd Street and East 47th Street is on a #zoning lot# with a #lot width# of 100 feet or more, as measured along the #street line# of the #narrow street#, a sidewalk widening shall be provided along such #narrow street#, to the extent necessary, so that a minimum sidewalk width of 15 feet is achieved, including portions within and beyond the #zoning lot#. However, no sidewalk widening need exceed 10 feet, as measured perpendicular to the #street line#.

Applications shall contain a ground floor level site plan, and other supporting documents of sufficient scope and detail to enable the Commission to determine the type of proposed #uses# on the ground floor level, the location of proposed #building# entrances, the size and location of proposed circulation spaces, the manner in which such spaces will connect to the overall pedestrian circulation network and the above- or below-grade public realm improvements required pursuant to this Section and any other details necessary for the Commission to determine whether the applicable findings set forth in paragraph (b) of this Section have been met.

(3) Building design

In order to ensure that the proposed #development# or #enlargement# contributes to its immediate surroundings, with particular emphasis on Grand Central Terminal, any #development# or #enlargement# proposed under the provisions of this Section shall demonstrate particular attention to the building design, including, but not limited to, the proposed #uses#, massing, articulation and relationship to #buildings#

in close proximity and within the Midtown Manhattan skyline.

Applications shall contain materials of sufficient scope and detail to enable the Commission to determine the proposed #uses# within the #building#, as well as the proposed #building# #bulk# and architectural design of the #building#, and to evaluate the proposed #building# in the context of adjacent #buildings# and the Midtown Manhattan skyline. Such materials shall include a description of the proposed #uses# within the #building#; measured elevation drawings, axonometric views, and perspective views showing such proposed #building# within the Midtown Manhattan skyline; and any other materials necessary for the Commission to determine whether the applicable findings set forth in paragraph (b) of this Section have been met.

For those #receiving lots# that are contiguous to a lot occupied by Grand Central Terminal or a lot that is across a #street# and opposite the lot occupied by Grand Central Terminal, or, in the case of a #corner lot#, one that fronts on the same #street# intersection as the lot occupied by Grand Central Terminal, applications shall contain a report from the Landmarks Preservation Commission concerning the harmonious relationship of the #development# or #enlargement# to Grand Central Terminal.

(4) Sustainable design measures

In order to foster the development of sustainable #buildings# in the Vanderbilt Corridor Subarea, any #development# or #enlargement# proposed under the provisions of this Section shall include sustainable design measures, including, but not limited to, enhancements to the energy performance, enhanced water efficiency, utilization of sustainable or locally sourced materials and attention to indoor environmental air quality of the #building#.

Applications shall contain materials of sufficient scope and detail to enable the Commission to determine whether the applicable findings in paragraph (b) of this Section have been met. In addition, any application shall include materials demonstrating the sustainable design measures of the #building#, including its anticipated energy performance, and the degree to which such performance exceeds either the New York City Energy Conservation Code (NYCECC) or the Building Performance Rating method of the applicable version and edition of American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers, Inc., Standard 90.1 (ASHRAE 90.1), as referenced within the NYCECC.

(b) Findings

The Commission shall find that:

(1) for a #development# or #enlargement# not located on two #wide streets#, the amount of additional #floor area# being granted is appropriate based on the extent to which any or all of the following physical factors are present in the #development# or #enlargement#:

(i) direct access to subway stations and other rail mass transit facilities;

(ii) the size of the #zoning lot#;

(iii) the amount of wide #street# frontage; and

(iv) adjacency to the open area above Grand Central Terminal;

(2) for above-grade improvements to the pedestrian circulation network that are located:

(i) on-site, the proposed improvements will, to the extent practicable, consist of a prominent space of generous proportions and quality design that is inviting to the public; improve pedestrian circulation and provide suitable amenities for the occupants; front upon a #street# or a pedestrian circulation space in close proximity to and within view of and accessible from an adjoining sidewalk; provide or be surrounded by active #uses#; be surrounded by transparent materials; provide connections to pedestrian circulation spaces in the immediate vicinity; and be designed in a manner that combines the separate elements within such space into a cohesive and harmonious site plan, resulting in a high-quality public space; or

(ii) off-site, the proposed improvements to the public right-of-way, to the extent practicable, will consist of significant street and sidewalk designs that improve pedestrian circulation in the surrounding area; provide comfortable places for walking and resting, opportunities for planting and improvements to pedestrian safety; and create a better overall user experience of the above-grade pedestrian circulation network that supports the surrounding area as a high-density business district. Where the area of such improvement is to be established into a pedestrian plaza that will undergo a public design and review process through the Department of Transportation subsequent to the approval of this special permit, the Commission may waive this finding;

(3) for below-grade improvements to the pedestrian or mass transit circulation network, the proposed improvements will provide:

(i) significant and generous connections from the above-grade pedestrian circulation network and surrounding #streets# to the below-grade pedestrian circulation network;

(ii) major improvements to public accessibility in the below-grade pedestrian circulation network between and within subway stations and other rail mass transit facilities in and around Grand Central Terminal through the provision of new connections, or the addition to or reconfiguration of existing connections; or

(iii) significant enhancements to the environment of subway stations and other rail mass transit facilities including daylight access, noise abatement, air quality improvement, lighting, finishes, way-finding or rider orientation, where practicable;

(4) the public benefit derived from the proposed above- or below-grade improvements to the pedestrian or mass transit circulation network merits the amount of additional #floor area# being granted to the proposed #development# or #enlargement# pursuant to this special permit;

(5) the design of the ground floor level of the #building#:

(i) contributes to a lively streetscape through a combination of retail #uses# that enliven the pedestrian experience, ample amounts of transparency and pedestrian connections that facilitate fluid movement between the #building# and adjoining public spaces; and demonstrates consideration for the location of pedestrian circulation space, #building# entrances, and the types of #uses# fronting upon the #street# or adjoining public spaces;

(ii) will substantially improve the accessibility of the overall pedestrian circulation network, reduce points of pedestrian congestion and, where applicable,

establish more direct and generous pedestrian connections to Grand Central Terminal; and

(iii) will be well-integrated with on-site, above- or below-grade improvements required by this Section, where applicable and practicable;

(6) the design of the proposed #building#:

(i) ensures light and air to the surrounding #streets# and public spaces through the use of setbacks, recesses and other forms of articulation, and the tower top produces a distinctive addition to the Midtown Manhattan skyline which is well-integrated with the remainder of the #building#;

(ii) demonstrates an integrated and well-designed facade, taking into account factors such as #street wall# articulation and fenestration, that creates a prominent and distinctive #building# which complements the character of the surrounding area, especially Grand Central Terminal; and

(iii) involves a program that includes an intensity and mix of #uses# that are harmonious with the type of #uses# in the surrounding area;

(7) the proposed #development# or #enlargement# comprehensively integrates sustainable measures into the #building# and site design that:

(i) meet or exceed best practices in sustainable design; and

(ii) will substantially reduce energy usage for the #building#, as compared to comparable #buildings#; and

(8) in addition:

(i) the increase in #floor area# being proposed in the #development# or #enlargement# will not unduly increase the #bulk#, density of population or intensity of #uses# to the detriment of the surrounding area; and

(ii) all of the separate elements within the proposed #development# or #enlargement#, including above- or below-grade improvements, the ground floor level, #building# design, and sustainable design measures, are well–integrated and will advance the applicable goals of the #Special Midtown District# described in Section 81-00 (GENERAL PURPOSES).

(c) Additional requirements

Prior to the grant of a special permit pursuant to this Section, and to the extent required by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) or any other City or State agencies with control and responsibility for the area in which a proposed improvement is to be located, the applicant shall execute an agreement, setting forth the obligations of the owner, its successors and assigns, to establish a process for design development and a preliminary construction schedule for the proposed improvement; construct the proposed improvement; where applicable, establish a program for maintenance; and, where applicable, establish a schedule of hours of public access for the proposed improvement. Where the MTA, or any other City or State agencies with control and responsibility for the area of a proposed improvement, deems necessary, such executed agreement shall set forth obligations of the applicant to provide a performance bond or other security for completion of the improvement in a form acceptable to the MTA or any other such agencies.

Where the proposed #development# or #enlargement# proposes an off-site improvement

located in an area to be acquired by a City or State agency, the applicant may propose a phasing plan to sequence the construction of such off-site improvement. To determine if such phasing plan is reasonable, the Commission may consult with the City or State agency that intends to acquire the area of the proposed improvement.

Prior to obtaining a foundation permit or building permit from the Department of Buildings, a written declaration of restrictions, in a form acceptable to the Chairperson of the City Planning Commission, setting forth the obligations of the owner to construct, and, where applicable, maintain and provide public access to public improvements provided pursuant to this Section, shall be recorded against such property in the Office of the Register of the City of New York (County of New York). Proof of recordation of the declaration of restrictions shall be submitted in a form acceptable to the Department of City Planning.

Except where a phasing plan is approved by the Commission, no temporary certificate of occupancy shall be granted by the Department of Buildings for the portion of the #building# utilizing bonus #floor area# granted pursuant to the provisions of this Section until the required improvements have been substantially completed, as determined by the Chairperson, acting in consultation with the MTA, or any other City or State agencies with control and responsibility for the area where a proposed improvement is to be located, where applicable, and such improvements are usable by the public. Such portion of the #building# utilizing bonus #floor area# shall be designated by the Commission in drawings included in the declaration of restrictions filed pursuant to this paragraph.

No permanent certificate of occupancy shall be granted by the Department of Buildings for the portion of the #building# utilizing bonus #floor area# until all improvements have been completed in accordance with the approved plans, as determined by the Chairperson, acting in consultation with the MTA, or any other City or State agencies with control and responsibility for the area where a proposed improvement is to be located, where applicable.

The Commission may prescribe appropriate conditions and safeguards to minimize adverse effects on the character of the surrounding area.