# Zoning for Flood Resilience Workshop

Rockaway Institute for a Sustainable Environment

**Location:** Rockaway Institute for a Sustainable Environment (RISE) – 58-03 Rockaway Beach Blvd.
**Date:** Tuesday July 18th from 5:30 – 7:30 pm

**List of DCP Staff //** Zoning: Nilus Klingel/Manuela Powidayko/Chris Holme, Urban Design Division: Thaddeus Pawlowski/Ryan Jacobson, Waterfront and Open Space: Mary Kimball/Ben Palevsky/Melissa Herlitz/Trevor Johnson, Queens Office: Brendan Pillar, Staten Island Office: Aleena Farishta, Land Use Review: Linda McIntyre

**RISE Staff //** Judah Asimov, Ana Fisyak

**List of Attendees //** Daris Garnes, Yoselin Genao-Estrell, Stephen Cooper, Al Moore, Vanessa Vasquez, Carla Connelly, Elaine Babian, Jessica Fain, Jacqueline Velez, Omar Clennon, Wally Zambrano, Natanael Soto, Louis Kleinman, Vella Voynova, Jessica Castro, Malgosia Madajewicz, Stephane Philmonor, Malik Sanders, John Calcagnile

## Workshop Description

### Summary

The Department of City Planning hosted an informational meeting and workshop about floodplain design and development. Following a short presentation on zoning rules that were adopted after Hurricane Sandy to facilitate resilient buildings, participants had the opportunity to share their ideas on how to shape a future update to these rules to advance resiliency in Rockaway and across the city.

### Goals

1. Educate the public about zoning for flood resilience;
2. Learn about resilience strategies in Rockaway buildings;
3. Establish urban design priorities for Rockaway and other coastal neighborhoods;
4. Collect feedback on how zoning can help achieve building-scale resiliency.

## Summary of Main Takeaways

Urban design priorities for Rockaway and other coastal neighborhoods -

- Several participants were architects who had experience working with the Zoning Resolution, 64-60 Design Mitigations. They have found that:
    - Certain requirements are a little too stringent (for instance, 30” max height for front of ‘raised yard’ mitigation conflicts with standard construction material dimensions of 32”or 36”)
    - Permitted obstructions for screened mechanicals in yards (which are limited 12’ above the adjoining grade per 64-421(6)(ii) but should have a little more flex, especially in a high DFE retrofit) can barely accommodate the opposite half of a mini-split AC system (which is supposed to be mounted internally at ceiling height, ~6’, which is problematic if your DFE is higher than 6’).

Feedback on how zoning can help achieve building-scale resiliency -

- There was general interest in seeing zoning incentivize building to future flood projections by offering extra Floor Area. One architect noted that once a building is up on rigging, adding another 3' feet is a negligible cost compared to the increased lifespan of that building. Specific ideas on generating extra Floor Area included:
    - Allowing partial/total enclosure of porches
    - Giving a bonus 0.1 FAR, for example in districts that normally only allow 0.5 FAR for a total of 0.6 FAR
- Challenges with low-density districts and the restrictiveness of their envelopes were shared, such as the open space ratio issue in R1-2 districts.
- City Planning needs to work with the Buildings Department on recurring interpretation issues, which include:
    - Disputes over what counts (and doesn't) as exempted "mechanical space"
    - Disputes over "attic bonus" floor area, and how it is counted.
    - Disputes over whether an "attic" counts as a "story" (both a #story# as well as a 'story' pursuant to Building Code) [note: 64-11 discounts an at-grade cellar from counting as a zoning story.]
- City Planning should revisit how it addresses porches in the flood text, as residents and architects noted that porches in the Rockaways have been enclosed and weatherproofed for year-round occupation. They are now sometimes required as a design mitigation, but there are limitations in 64-60 on how they're designed. They must be completely unenclosed and one step down (a problem, according to architects, for ADA). Could DCP consider allowing a porch to be partially enclosed, perhaps 6' deep, with 50% enclosed and 50% unenclosed, in terms of a "resiliency bonus" for new construction or fully-resilient retrofits?
- Challenges for Condos to retrofit: by-laws do not allow for any changes on the building's exterior, not even for mechanical equipment to be placed on the back of a building or elsewhere as permitted obstruction. Some of these condos have subgrade spaces and if homeowner were to fill it to grade, they would not be able to replace that space elsewhere (atop of building, or behind, etc.).

Feedback on non-zoning resiliency issues -

- Flooding is worse for communities that are closer to the Bay than from areas that are closer to the beach on the south portion of the peninsula. Participants were interested in learning about the possibility of infrastructure improvements on the edge of the bay;
- Participants wanted more information on other funding sources available (or become available in the future) to retrofit homes, since the Build it Back program has concluded;
- A resident from the ground-floor of a condo did not know if she had flood insurance, and we shared the importance of purchasing flood insurance today, so that rates are grandfathered in. There was an interest among some residents for more information on flood insurance costs and future increases.


How to improve the workshop?

- John Calcagnile is interested in seeing this workshop replicated in Howard Beach, but noted that the "low, medium, and high" flood elevation categories add another confusing layer to the workshop process.
- A few participants commended DCP for its diligence in analysis and outreach since Hurricane Sandy, including the Resilient Neighborhoods studies and Special Regulations for Neighborhood Recovery.
- Louis from the Waterfront Alliance urged that the concerns shared be incorporated sooner rather than later, and was disappointed by the 2018 timeline for implementation.