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**A RECOVERY FOR ALL OF US: MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES ZONING
CHANGES TO CREATE MORE VIBRANT, EQUITABLE CITY**

*Responding to challenges highlighted by COVID-19 pandemic, proposals expected to go into
public review this year*

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio today announced a set of new citywide zoning actions to bring more grocery stores to local communities, improve accessibility, and support a range of small businesses across the city. These changes will each start public review this spring and remain on track to be adopted by the end of this year.

“Building a recovery for all of us means cutting red tape and supporting efforts to make our communities healthier and more accessible,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “These zoning changes will help New Yorkers create the neighborhoods we all want to live in: ones with fresh food, easy access to health and wellness facilities, and equitable transit access for New Yorkers with disabilities.”

“We are using every tool at our disposal to advance a fair recovery for New Yorkers. These zoning actions will remove barriers to providing grocery stores, encourage accessible transit, and allow a wide range of small businesses across the five boroughs to open more easily,” said **Deputy Mayor for Housing and Economic Development Vicki Been**. “We look forward to advancing these actions with our partners and furthering a strong recovery for New York City.”

“In our most difficult moments, we find the most innovative solutions to the problems facing us. These zoning proposals focus on our city’s recovery, addressing some of the challenges of today and tomorrow. I look forward to the public discussion around these proposals, and especially how they can contribute to a stronger, more equitable city,” said **Department of City Planning (DCP) Director Marisa Lago**.

“The Zoning for Accessibility (ZFA) proposal will be a game-changer that will enable a more fully accessible subway system at an even faster pace,” said **Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities Commissioner and MTA Board Member Victor Calise**. “Elevators truly are for everyone and ZFA will enable all New Yorkers and visitors to the city, including those with disabilities, to get to where they need to go.”

“Grocery stores are essential community infrastructure and grocery store workers and owners have kept us all fed during these challenging times,” said **Kate MacKenzie, Director of the Mayor’s Office of Food Policy**. “By expanding the FRESH program to additional neighborhoods, the City is acknowledging not only the important role grocery stores have played during the crisis but also that supporting the food sector is essential for an equitable recovery.”

These proposals seek to incentivize the creation of green grocery stores in communities facing barriers to food access; improve accessibility to transit stations; remove bureaucratic hurdles to establishing and opening community gyms and other health facilities; and ensure the zoning code is not a barrier to supporting small businesses in the Open Restaurants program. Each proposal has citywide implications, benefitting a wide array of communities across all five boroughs.

Public meetings for these actions will be scheduled over the coming months, culminating in the start of public review for each of these proposals this spring or summer, with the goal of reaching approval before the end of the administration.

The coming new citywide text amendment proposals are:

FRESH II

The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically highlighted the vital need for local access to fresh food. In partnership with the City Council, DCP will seek to expand the existing [Food Retail Expansion to Support Health \(FRESH\)](#) program, which offers zoning incentives and financial benefits to encourage the creation of convenient, accessible stores that provide fresh fruit, meats and vegetables, and other perishable goods in addition to a full range of grocery products.

The [new FRESH proposal](#) aims to bring the program to 11 more community districts – in addition to 19 districts currently in the program – including:

- Bronx Community Districts 8 and 9
- Brooklyn Community Districts 1, 2, 12 and 13
- Queens Community Districts 1, 3, 4 and 14
- Staten Island Community District 1

Elevate Transit: Zoning for Accessibility (ZFA) Text Amendment

In collaboration with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), City Council, and advocates, the City will expand and improve zoning rules that allow the MTA to leverage private development to add elevators or other station access to New York City Transit (NYCT), Staten Island Railway (SIR), Long Island Rail Road, and Metro-North stations in the City. For example, less than 30% of the 493 NYCT subway and SIR stations in New York City are currently wheelchair accessible.

This proposal will expand existing zoning tools to coordinate new developments near transit with the construction of improvements to station accessibility and capacity. Currently, this zoning tool is limited to a few areas of the city, mostly in Manhattan. The proposal would require property owners of developments near stations to proactively work with the MTA to provide station access easements. The proposal will also expand zoning incentives for developments in high-density districts to construct station improvements that advance accessibility.

Every elevator and accessible entrance and platform is an invaluable improvement for individuals with physical disabilities, parents with young children who use strollers, seniors, and indeed all New Yorkers and visitors to the city.

Health and Fitness Text Amendment

Based on outmoded zoning regulations that date to the 1970s, exercise gyms, licensed massage therapy, martial arts studios, and spas, among other health-related businesses, are required to obtain special permission from the City's Board of Standards and Appeals (BSA) to open. The process for obtaining a permit is extremely costly, often adding six months and at least \$50,000 in additional startup costs to open a gym. This creates a high barrier for small and independent businesses and is likely to slow the economic recovery of a sector that has been significantly impacted by the pandemic.

Because health and fitness facilities offer valued and beneficial amenities to communities, the City is working to allow these businesses to open “as of right,” or without first seeking special permission. This text amendment acknowledges the need for health and fitness facilities by removing unnecessary barriers for these small businesses.

Open Restaurants

New York City’s [Open Restaurants](#) program, which has more than 11,000 participants across the five boroughs, has re-energized the city streetscape and saved an estimated 100,000 jobs. The City will secure the future of outdoor dining by reviewing and removing zoning limitations that may hinder efforts to make the program permanent.

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