



ENVIRONMENTAL SIMULATION CENTER

East Midtown Study: Proposed Rezoning

Description

The Department of City Planning ("DCP") has proposed the rezoning of East Midtown beyond the densities currently permitted in the Special Midtown District and the Grand Central Subdistrict. DCP's objective for the upzoning of East Midtown and an expanded TDR area is to provide the incentive to assemble large sites for the development of new state-of-the-art large floor plate Class A office buildings in an area which has seen little new office construction in the past decade.

The proposed rezoning expands Grand Central Subdistrict and its as-of-right Floor Area Ratio ("FAR") increased to 21.6 FAR in the Perimeter Area and 24.0 FAR in the Core Area for blocks fronting Grand Central Terminal. A special permit will allow a maximum 30.0 FAR for sites greater than 40,000 SF in the Core Area. Increases in FAR from the base FAR are achieved through a contribution to the District Improvement Fund, purchase of the Terminal's unused development rights ("TDR"), and on-site improvements.

Verifiable Visual Simulations

The Environmental Simulation Center ("ESC") brought to bear its extensive experience developing visual simulation techniques and methodologies, using them to inform the public decision-making process. In land-use debates accuracy is critical. The ESC's visual simulations are accurate and most importantly dimensionally verifiable and queryable. They are not renderings or "artist's conceptions" but rather immersive real-time 3D environments in which the proposed actions are accurately modeled, located, and represented in the 3D context model. The ESC's photo simulations are literally snapshots taken from locations inside the 3D real-time context model of Midtown.

Selected Sites

To assist the public and decision-makers understand and assess the implications of the Department of City Planning's proposed rezoning of East Midtown, the Environmental Simulation Center was retained by the Municipal Arts Society ("MAS") to visualize the proposed rezoning. In collaboration with the MAS, the ESC reviewed the "Projected and Potential Development Sites" identified in DCP's [East Midtown Rezoning and Related Actions \(Figure 5\)](#). Eight sites were selected from the [DCP report \(January 29, 2013\)](#) of which six sites are identified as "Projected" (Sites S-4, S-5, S-6, S-7, S-9, and S-10), one "Potential" (P-3), and the Hyatt Hotel (aka Commodore Hotel) which is not identified by DCP as a site because of their screening criteria, but at a minimum, a Potential and in all likelihood a Projected Development Site. All of the development sites are adjacent or almost adjacent to Grand Central Terminal, grouped along Madison and Vanderbilt Avenues and East 42nd Street, and are the largest grouping of development sites identified in the DCP report. With the eight development sites assembled in the 3D context model, the public and decision makers should have a clearer understanding of the cumulative impact of the proposed rezoning of East Midtown.

[Click here](#) to view ESC's complete presentation of building massing on the identified projected & potential development sites.

Development Program

The eight developments were configured as Class A office buildings with one or two stories of ground floor retail. The lot sizes ranged from ±57,300 SF (the Hyatt Hotel), ±46,000-±50,000 SF (the Madison Avenue block front sites), to ±43,300 SF (the four full block sites between Madison and Vanderbilt Avenues). The eight Projected/Potential Developments were configured using the current Midtown zoning Daylight Compensation Height and Setback regulations can accommodate up to 24.0 FAR. regulations. The 30.0 FAR Special Permit developments assumed a discretionary modification or a waiver of the Daylight Compensation Height and Setback regulations by the City Planning Commission. Given the performance nature of the Midtown zoning regulations, it was possible for the largest office floor sizes to drive each development's configuration. For example, assuming the maximum permitted as-of-right 21.6 FAR in the Perimeter Area and 30.0 FAR in the Core Area by special permit, the typical floor size at which approximately 50% of the total floor area is achieved range from approximately 40,000 SF for the Madison Avenue blockfront sites, approximately 27,000 SF for the full block sites, and approximately 45,000 SF for the Hyatt site. All of the developments house approximately 1,000,000 SF with the exception of the Hyatt site which contains almost 2,000,000 SF.

[Click here](#) to see floor area & floor size calculations for the development sites

Floor to floor heights are 14 ft., the current office building standard. Because of the need for large office floors, the blockfront towers are less than 500 ft. tall and the full block towers approximately 900-1,000 ft. tall. If there was a residential or hotel component the typical floor sizes would be considerably smaller and the buildings considerably taller.

[Click here for Michael Kwartler's article "Daylight as a Zoning Device For Midtown" on the origin of Midtown zoning height & setback Regulations](#)

[MAS East Midtown Report](#)

[DCP Updated Presentation \(April, 2013\)](#)

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