



THE CITY OF NEW YORK MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD 3

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Community Board 3 Economic Development Committee Public Forum: Special Zoning District

What is a special district?

A special district is an overlay used as a tool to supplement and modify the underlying zoning in order to respond to distinctive neighborhoods with particular issues and goals.

The City Planning Commission has been designating special zoning districts since 1969 to achieve specific planning and urban design objectives in defined areas with unique characteristics. Special districts respond to specific conditions; each special district designated by the Commission stipulates zoning requirements and/or zoning incentives tailored to distinctive qualities that may not lend themselves to generalized zoning and standard development. Special purpose districts are shown as overlays on the zoning maps and are in Articles VIII-XIII of the Zoning Resolution.

Examples of various types of special districts can be seen across the city, including on the Upper West Side, Battery Park, Harlem, Hudson Yards, and Little Italy.

Why a special district in the East Village and why now?

CD 3 has experienced a dramatic loss of small “mom & pop” businesses in the past 10+ years, and a resulting decrease in the diversity and affordability of local goods and services. Driven by a combination of high commercial rents and real estate taxes, competition from an over-proliferation and concentration of destination nightlife businesses and national chain stores who can afford exorbitant rents, and a lack of daytime foot traffic, the loss of small businesses has been sustained in recent years.

What are the goals of a special district in CB 3?

- preserve the unique, individual character of our neighborhoods
- facilitate a diverse, affordable, and appropriate mix of retail and service providers that meet local needs
- encourage daytime businesses that do not have a disruptive effect on residents
- support existing businesses serving local needs
- limit the ground floor presence of inactive street wall frontages
- promote strong and affordable neighborhoods that are inviting to all New Yorkers, especially families

How will a special district affect certain uses?

The special district is not meant to push out existing businesses and nightlife establishments. Rather, the effort is to strike a balance and create a level playing field for small businesses. In the current proposal, eating/drinking establishments, banks, and chains would have restrictions on maximum total size (2,500 square feet) and maximum street wall width (25 linear feet). They would also be prohibited from combining storefronts across separate buildings. Additionally, there would be restrictions on how much of a block’s street frontage can be occupied by a particular use – for example, no more than 25% of any given block’s street frontage can be occupied by eating/drinking establishments and there cannot be more than 1 chain store or bank per block.

I am thinking of opening a business in the East Village that does not meet the parameters of the special district. Does your current proposal take exceptions into consideration?

In the current proposal, applications for exceptions will require a mandatory review process and referral to the Community Board for a recommendation.

Based on the current proposal, where will the special district be located?

- 14th Street to Houston; 2nd Avenue to Avenue D (excluding N/S sides of Houston and 14th) with an extension on St Marks to 3rd Avenue