

**TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC HEARING BEFORE
THE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
SEPTEMBER 12, 1960**

in the matter of....

Comprehensive Amendment
of the Zoning Resolution
of The City of New York

Borough of Manhattan

C.P. 15820

VOLUME:3

PUBLIC HEARING

before the

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

in the matter of a

PROPOSED COMPREHENSIVE AMENDMENT
Pursuant to Section 200 of the New York City Charter

of the

ZONING RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

consisting of

TEXT AND MAPS

Held at City Hall, Borough of Manhattan

Beginning on September 12, 1960, and continued on
September 13 and 14, 1960.

CONTINUED HEARING -- PROPOSED ZONING MAPS FOR THE
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN
September 12, 1960

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

James Felt, Chairman
Francis J. Bloustein,
Vice-Chairman
Abraham M. Lindenbaum
Goodhue Livingston, Jr.
Lawrence M. Orton
Michael A. Provenzano
James G. Sweeney
Commissioners

Pauline J. Malter, Secretary

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PUBLIC HEARING CONTINUED - SEPTEMBER 12, 1960 - 5:15 P.M.

IN THE MATTER OF THE PROPOSED COMPREHENSIVE
AMENDMENT PURSUANT TO SECTION 200 OF THE
NEW YORK CITY CHARTER, OF THE ZONING RESOLUTION
OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK, CONSISTING OF TEXT
AND MAPS (CP-15820)

PROPOSED ZONING MAPS FOR THE
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN

CHAIRMAN FELT: I have a statement from the Yorkville Civic Council, of 411 East 69th Street, Manhattan, and a telegram from the East Side Chamber of Commerce, addressed to me and the members of the City Planning Commission, which I have been asked to read:

LIS L. RUSCH, YORKVILLE CIVIC COUNCIL (statement of)
Sept. 12, 1960.

"The Yorkville Civic Council wholeheartedly supports the proposed zoning regulations and urges immediate approval of the new plan to replace the obsolete resolution of 1916." Lis L. Rusch,
Vice President"

BARNETT AUGUST, EAST SIDE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE (statement of)

"Hon. James Felt, Chairman, City Planning Commission, City Hall, N.Y. Please record our approval of the proposed zoning changes. Our Organization endorses your program." "Barnett August, Executive Director, East Side Chamber of Commerce."

CHAIRMAN FELT: (continuing) I have the names of speakers before me and I shall call the first four, so that you may know the order of your appearance:

Gabriel Zuckerman, William J. Marvin, Norman Redlich and Elsa Steinert. Mr. Zuckerman?

GABRIEL ZUCKERMAN, CHELSEA COMMITTEE FOR NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT

MR. ZUCKERMAN: Chairman Felt, gentlemen of the City Planning Commission: I am Gabriel Zuckerman, Chairman of the Area Planning Committee, Chelsea Committee for Neighborhood Development.

The Chelsea Committee for Neighborhood Development endorses the modernization of the Zoning Code as expressed in the basic principles of the new proposed zoning regulations.

The new zoning regulations, with the one-map system, floor area ratio, open space ratio, allows flexibility and proper planning for the New York City of the future.

Chelsea, in the heart of Manhattan, is a neighborhood typical of others which will benefit greatly from the new zoning laws. Chelsea has suffered because some areas had been zoned "unrestricted". This created incompatible uses, with industrial buildings creating hardships for the occupants of adjacent residential buildings and vice versa. The new laws would correct this and create a sounder basis for real estate investment.

Excessive density of population has blighted Chelsea. Hospital, welfare, health, recreation, sanitation and police services have been unjustifiably high in cost compared to the size of Chelsea's population. The new zoning laws would check excessive population density.

At present, heavy traffic rambles through Chelsea's congested residential streets, parking facilities are inadequate, and the large retail shopping areas on the fringe of Chelsea have lost a substantial volume of business to the more spacious shopping centers

in the suburbs where roads are easier to travel and parking facilities are more adequate.

The new zoning regulations will take cognizance of transportation and parking facilities, recreational space, the need for light, air, and space that people need to live and work in.

For all these reasons the people of Chelsea hope for the prompt enactment of the zoning resolution.

CHAIRMAN FELT: Thank you, sir.

William F. Marvin.

WILLIAM F. MARVIN, representing himself.

MR. MARVIN: I'm a homeowner on West 9th Street, and I am a member of the Association of Village Homeowners, and I'm speaking on behalf of West 8th Street which, I believe, in the new Zoning Resolution, will be scaled down to Zone 4 and 5 where it should be C-1.

These terms don't mean much to me, but the idea back of them means a great deal. Eighth Street is the main street of the Village, and if the Village -- if 8th Street is left open to garages and theatres, the entire character of, in one sense, the central core of the spiritual thing about the village will be literally wiped out.

I'm acquainted with the City of Boston. There is an area there that is fifty acres square, I've been told, where you can't paint a door or you can't alter a roof because these buildings are historically and traditionally significant. As a result, Boston is a

cultural center. Architecturally, it is frequently regarded as the most interesting City in the world or in the United States.

Unfortunately, we have "razed" a great deal of the architectural beauty of New York City. I am extremely happy that this zoning resolution will check, if not completely put a stop to, this, and I can only see the failure to recognize that West 8th Street is a central focus in the Village is something that I'm sure could very easily be altered. There are some shabby shops and some not too respectable beer joints on the street. I believe the whole street has been scaled down to these few miserable examples, and that this is a serious mistake and will change materially the character of a very beautiful part of New York City.

I live on 9th Street, and I know what I'm talking about. So what we want here is low bulk, low density, and more restricted use. I don't think this is an unreasonable request.

CHAIRMAN FELT: Thank you.

Mr. Redlich. Is Mr. Redlich present?

NORMAN REDLICH, Chairman, Housing Committee of Greenwich Village Association.

MR. REDLICH: Chairman Felt, Members of the City Planning Commission:

I am Norman Redlich, Chairman of the Housing Committee of the Greenwich Village Association and a member of the Borough President's Planning Board.

I'm speaking on behalf of the Housing Committee of the

Greenwich Village Association and also on behalf of Mr. Anthony DePalato, who is President of the Greenwich Village Association.

Since other commitments prevented my being here this morning, I ask your indulgence for a brief statement in general support of the Zoning Resolution and then a brief comment with regard to our particular area.

As a lawyer and businessman, I have long been aware of the inability of the existing Zoning Resolution to meet the legitimate residential, commercial and industrial needs of New York City. As Chairman of the Housing Committee of the Greenwich Village Association, I have seen the dreary consequences of an out-moded zoning system which permits a low-density, low-scale area such as a Greenwich Village to be cannibalized by the unrestricted influx of high-rise luxury housing. Our Housing Committee has had to cope with the problems created when residential, commercial, and industrial uses compete for dominance in unrestricted areas. We know that our experiences are typical of a city-wide pattern resulting from forty-four years of piecemeal amendments to the 1916 resolution. It has been evident for at least the past decade that a new Zoning Resolution was essential.

Our Committee enthusiastically supports the new resolution because we feel that it can provide a reasoned pattern of growth for our city, and because in the area of our particular concern, Greenwich Village, the Zoning Resolution recognizes the benefit to our City of preserving the existing residential character of our community.

As this Commission knows, the Greenwich Village community

with its broad base of citizenship participation has been deeply concerned over the seemingly irresistible wave of new construction which threatens to obliterate a neighborhood long noted for its diversity, its culture, its vitality, and above all its family-oriented stability. The new Zoning Resolution offers the best foreseeable hope for the development of the type of city which we in Greenwich Village have fought to achieve, a city where the home, the factory and the store can service each other without the senseless process of mutual destruction with which we are all familiar.

The Resolution will provide the density controls which are vitally needed to guarantee space, light and air not only for those who live here but for those who contribute to our industrial and commercial life and who also need a meaningful sense of order in their surroundings.

While proper zoning is but an element in the continuing effort to achieve these ends, it is perhaps the most essential one. The Housing Committee of the Greenwich Village Association and the full Greenwich Village Association itself is pleased to support this resolution in the spirit of City Planning which created it and which will follow it through to its final adoption.

I may add that our Committee has been aware that if the Zoning Resolution is ultimately to be adopted, all of us who may have some reservations concerning it must be prepared to postpone some of our specific objections until such time as the Zoning Resolution has been adopted. We, in the Village, have been deeply concerned over the new resolution because of the fear

we have with regard to the 8th Street area. We are concerned over the possible downgrading and unrestricted use of the 8th Street area which is the commercial core of the Greenwich Village community.

However, we would hope that in the interim between the time the Zoning Resolution is ultimately adopted and the time it becomes effective, amending procedures will be established and will exist to enable such changes as we in the Village feel are necessary, with regard to the 8th Street area --

CHAIRMAN FELT: You mean during the one-year grace period?

MR. REDLICH: During the one-year grace period.

With that assurance, we in Greenwich Village are most pleased to endorse the existing Zoning Resolution, despite the reservation that we have with regard to the 8th Street area.

Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN FELT: Thank you.

Elsa Steinert.

Elsa Steinert, Washington Square Association.

MISS STEINERT: My name is Elsa Steinert. I'm the Executive Secretary of the Washington Square Association, and I have a memo here from our President, Mr. Henry deRham, who was not able to be present because he's confined in the hospital.

"We greatly respect and are deeply grateful for your concern with the zoning problems of the Greenwich Village area, and particularly appreciate your willingness, and that of your staff, to discuss our zoning problems with us. We would be remiss, however,

if we did not express to you our great concern over any zoning proposal which might endanger the character of the Village as a primary residential and cultural community.

"In our letter to you of March 21, 1960 we listed certain amendments to the 1960 proposed zoning maps which we felt were important to foster the proper development of the Village. We understood in subsequent conferences with members of your staff that there were no major objections from a social, political, or planning point of view to the proposals we made, and that our proposals were in harmony with the Commission's objective of improving the Village area as a better place in which to live and work. We find now that the present proposed zoning maps reflect only a few of the changes we suggested.

"We realize, of course, that zoning in itself is not the complete answer to the ills which may beset a particular community, but we believe very strongly that the changes we suggested would have a tendency to "up grade" the area, and that unless these changes are, in fact, made there would be a tendency towards the opposite direction. We also realize that the differences may in many cases be of opinion and not of policy and in this respect, we are encouraged by the assurances of the Commission that these matters may be discussed fully and carefully during the grace period with a view to resolving any differences of opinion.

"Among the specific areas with which we are particularly concerned are the West 8th Street -- Village Square neighborhood,

West 4th Street, Grace Church - Broadway area, the 14th Street area along 5th, 6th, and 7th Avenues, as well as the side streets 13th to 16th Streets. We are also concerned with the development of the South East Village area near Cooper Square and at the opposite side of the Greenwich Village community, the so-called West Village where a renaissance of residential construction is burgeoning. We are not more specific in this memorandum because our opinion has been given in detail earlier, and since these matters will not be discussed until after the approval of a text of the resolution. We wish, however, to reaffirm vigorously our representations that our opinions be given most serious consideration as being based upon an intimate knowledge of the Greenwich Village area and of the different application of the zoning resolution which must apply to it as compared with other areas in the greater city.

" We appreciate very much your expressions of cooperation in the past, and we look forward to a mutually satisfactory solution of our zoning problems in the future."

And as we have -- Mr. Weinberg spoke for me this morning -- we are in full accord with the text of your new Zoning Resolution and we do hope it will be put through just as quickly as possible. And I have a copy of this memo signed by Mr. deRham to present to you, Mr. Felt, and to members of your Commission.

CHAIRMAN FELT: Thank you very much.

There are a few more cards that I have before me. I have just been given a statement from Mrs. Doris Diether, Vice President

of the "Save the Village" committee, and I don't think it would be fair for others waiting to read the entire statement. It will be placed in the record. I will read the first and last paragraphs because I think that in effect summarizes the content.

(Chairman Felt then read the opening and closing paragraphs of the following text.)

DORIS DIETHER:

September 12, 1960

To: Mr. James Felt and Members of the New York City Planning Commission.

From: Mrs. Doris Diether, Vice-President of the "Save the Village" Committee, 107 Waverly Place, New York 11, N.Y.

Gentlemen:

"Save the Village" wishes to go on record as supporting the "Proposed Comprehensive Amendment of the Zoning Resolution".

"I would like to mention a few facts about our "Save the Village" Committee for those who may not know who we are. At present, we have a mailing list of about 1,000 people, approximately 90% of whom live in Greenwich Village. We represent low-income people living in cold-water flats with rentals of \$16.00 a month, and also those such as residents of Washington Square Village with rentals of \$380.00 a month. We represent people who were born and raised in the Village, and have lived there for fifty or sixty years, and newcomers who have moved in within the last six months. Our members are architects, lawyers, politicians, office clerks, truck drivers, waitresses; and, of course, writers, painters and musicians. We represent both land owners and tenants. Despite this cross-section

of the population, we are a special-interest group; we are all Villagers.

"In studying the maps and text of this new zoning, we kept in mind at all times the diverse interests we are representing. We were well aware of the special problems our area posed. In many areas of the city, it is possible to zone large sections into one zoning district or another without much difficulty; but in our area of narrow streets and low buildings, with its mixture of residences, small shops and manufacturing companies, and with its picturesque and historic nature, this called for practically a block-by-block study, and we are very grateful to this Commission for taking the time and energy to do this.

"In studying this revision, we were pleased to notice several changes in the text which were favorable to our area, and several map changes which were in line with our concept of the neighborhood. Naturally enough, in something as large-scale as this, there were some items which we still feel need revision. In some places we believe that the relaxing of some of the provisions, for which you were undoubtedly under great pressure, result in their now being not strict enough. On these we have suggested changes back to the original, or compromises which might satisfy the opposition partly, without depriving us of the protection we feel is necessary. These suggestions will be handed in to you today, with the hope that they will be given serious consideration, which you have given our suggestions in the past.

"However, in no way are these objections to be construed as an attempt on our part to delay passage of the Zoning Amendment. On the contrary, we wish that it could go into effect sooner than it will. As you probably know from the newspapers, we have been waging almost a constant war in our area to slow down the demolition and preserve the character of the neighborhood. By character, we mean not only the buildings, but also the people who live there. We have fought every attempt by builders to circumvent the zoning amendment you passed for our area by means of variances which we felt were unjustified, and we will do the same with regard to the new zoning when it goes into effect.

"In this matter we were especially interested in the section on Variances, and our attorneys tell us that this section sets up much stricter conditions on builders who are seeking variances. We were also pleased about the zoning down of avenues, and the height and bulk regulations in general for our area. The Village is popular as a place to live because of its open area, small-scale buildings, and decent-sized apartments. This is what the new zoning hopes to accomplish for the other sections of the city. If it is successful, the city will be a better place to work in and live in.

"What has happened in Chelsea and other areas, and is now going on in Greenwich Village and spreading to areas like Brooklyn Heights -- the over-building, the inflated land values, and the forcing-out of long-time residents-- can be prevented, or at least slowed down, by the speedy adoption of this new zoning. Building

will still go on, but it will be planned building, with provision made for open space, liveable apartments, and a stable population with corresponding land values.

"We think that, rather than being too hasty, this zoning has been too slow in coming. The sooner it goes into effect the easier our fight will be. We urge it be passed as soon as possible. Thank you."

CHAIRMAN FELT: Madame Secretary, please include this in the record. Is Mr. Canevari present?

He spoke this morning and I think he wished to speak this afternoon, but it may be that the statement he made this morning covered the remarks that he wished to present to us.

Harold D. Collins; is Mr. Collins present? (no response)

Robert C. Weinberg. He spoke this morning.

MISS STEINERT: I was speaking for him. He's Chairman of our Committee.

CHAIRMAN FELT: Thank you. Reverend Philip Watters?

REVEREND PHILIP S. WATTERS, representing Washington Square Methodist Church.

Mr. Chairman, I'm the minister of Washington Square Methodist Church on 4th Street. The last speaker whom I heard really gave expression to what has been my own thinking, namely, that we want to preserve as far as we can the cultural values and the ideals of Greenwich Village.

We sometimes have difficulty persuading people that it is a good place to live because they've heard all sorts of strange things about it. And taxi cab people say, "You ought to hear what I tell them about Greenwich Village because if they didn't think there was something funny down here we wouldn't get any business."

I'm thinking not only of our old Church which just celebrated its centenary, but I'm thinking also of the wonderful university which is right near us on the Square. I'm sorry that sometimes there's a feeling of conflict between the two, New York University is one of the institutions of which our City ought to be tremendously proud, and if we open up 4th Street and the rest of that region so close to the University, so close to that \$4,000,000 Law School and the rest of it, it seems to me we're doing a very great disservice to our city.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FELT: Thank you, Reverend.

Does anyone else wish to be heard on mapping in Manhattan?

MRS. HILDA HOLLYER, Executive Member, Association of Village Home Owners.

I spoke this morning and my name is in for this afternoon.

CHAIRMAN FELT: May we have your name, please, for the record?

MRS. HOLLYER: I'm Mrs. Daniel Hollyer. I represent the Association of Village Home Owners, and this morning we very strongly and emphatically supported the proposed Zoning Resolution and urged its very rapid passage.

We do, however, have one very important revision to suggest, and I will be specific, although I know we will be talking about it later because it is so important to the home owners of our organization.

We think West 8th Street should positively not be zoned C4-5, which is the same designation as you have given to 6th Avenue.

The commercial uses which are covered by C4-5 are not appropriate for 8th Street, in our opinion. It is incompatible with its major character as a street with artisan shops and local retail shopping. It would permit the extension of those undesirable commercial uses which now exist only sporadically and by sufferance and in the face of vigorous objection by the community.

West 8th Street is a narrow street, already over-taxed by traffic, and must not be zoned C4-5, which in its definition permits the commercial use generating considerable traffic. This would create pressure, in our opinion, to open Washington Square to traffic -- a situation which, as you know, is almost unanimously opposed by the neighborhood and by the people of the city, generally.

We believe that a designation of C4-5 for W. 8th Street would ruin the residential streets to the north and south of 8th Street to the effect of increased traffic and parking and large-scale commercial activities in their back yard.

In summary, we are for a low bulk and low height and restricted retail use in keeping with the residential streets surrounding 8th Street and which will not blight the adjacent homes and gardens which are among the most beautiful in the Village, and which add so much to its character. We recommend C-1-6 for 8th Street.

We have one other very small point to make:

We direct attention to the special effect of the general height regulation on the several small triangles which are frequent in the neighborhood, where the small residential properties would be swallowed up if the heights of the adjacent avenues are permitted for the same distance from the corner as on regular blocks. We think a special formula might be devised for this group of situations.

These proposals are made on behalf of our 70 members, all individual home owners, with a long term concern with sound historical development and future needs of the Villages.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FELLS: Thank you very much.

Does anyone else wish to be heard on either the Manhattan mapping, the Bronx mapping or the text of the Resolution as a whole?

(No response.)

SECRETARY MALIER: This meeting will stand in recess until tomorrow morning --

CHAIRMAN FELLS: Just a moment.

In connection with the statement that you were about to

make, Madame Secretary, I wish to have it spread on the record that if necessary, this hearing will be continued on Wednesday morning, September the 14th, at 10:00 a.m.

SECRETARY MALTER: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

In the meantime, this hearing will stand recessed until tomorrow morning at 10:00 a.m., when the maps for the Boroughs of Brooklyn, Queens and Richmond will be heard in that order, subject to any change in procedure by the Commission.

CHAIRMAN FELT: Thank you.

Will the Secretary please call the roll for the purpose stated.

SECRETARY MALTER: Chairman Felt, Vice Chairman Bloustein, Commissioners Lindenbaur, Livingston, Orton, Provenzano, Sweeney.

This hearing is now recessed at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, September 12th, 1960, to resume Tuesday, September 13th, 1960, at 10 a.m. on the proposed zoning maps for the Boroughs of Brooklyn, Queens and Richmond, in that order.