

# **SPECIAL LINCOLN SQUARE DISTRICT ZONING REVIEW**



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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Special Lincoln Square District, located in the southern portion of Community District Seven between Central Park West, Amsterdam Avenue, and West 60th and West 68th streets, was established in 1969. The area is characterized by major institutions, such as Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, and a number of relatively recent mixed-use developments along Broadway.

After evaluating more than twenty years of development pursuant to the special district's controls, the Department of City Planning has identified several outstanding planning issues relating to the mix of uses, and the form and height of development. These issues are particularly relevant to Broadway, which is the spine of the district and contains its most significant development opportunities.

The Department proposes revisions to the special district in order to guide development in a more predictable form, with a level of commercial use that is consistent with the area's overall development pattern and with building heights that are compatible with the character of the district.

The first major recommendation relates to the regulation of commercial use. The current regulations permit a maximum base of 10 FAR of either commercial or residential use within the district's C4-7 zoning. The Department proposes to reduce the allowable amount of commercial use in future as-of-right development from 10 to 3.4 FAR in those areas of the district where residential use predominates. In addition, the amount of floor area allowed for theaters and other entertainment uses (Use Group 8), is proposed to be limited in areas of the district.

The second major recommendation relates to building form. The Department proposes an envelope control that would reinforce the "tower on a base" form already mandated along Broadway. These regulations combined would result in building heights in the range of the mid-20 to 30 stories tall, which would complement the district's existing neighborhood character.

Other recommendations address additional land use and urban design issues. Principal among them is a proposed requirement for subway stair relocation or access, applicable to sites adjacent to the district's two subway stations. Modifications to the arcade, parking and off-street loading provisions are also proposed.

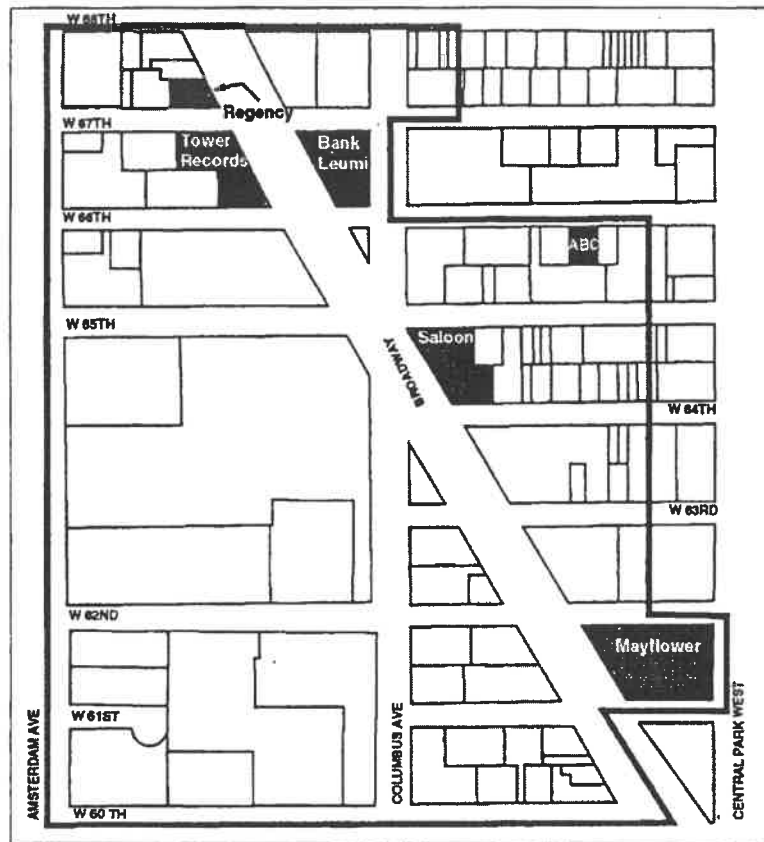


FIGURE 3

## DEVELOPMENT SITES

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There are six remaining development sites in the district (Figure 3). For the purposes of this study, a property is considered a development site if it is either vacant land or contains a vacant building; contains a commercial building which is at least 50 percent under allowable FAR; or is a residential building with less than four occupied units. The sites are:

1. **Bank Leumi**, a full-block site directly south of the Lincoln Square development between Broadway, Columbus Avenue, West 66th and West 67th streets;
2. **Tower Records/Penthouse Magazine building**, a five story commercial building on Broadway, just north of Lincoln Center between West 66th and West 67th streets;

3. **Regency Theater**, located at West 67th and Broadway;
4. **Saloon/Chemical Bank buildings**, a possible assemblage located on Broadway between West 64th and West 65th streets;
5. **Mayflower block**, a full-block site bounded by Broadway, Central Park West, West 61st and West 62nd streets, containing a vacant parcel facing Broadway and the Mayflower Hotel on Central Park West;
6. **ABC assemblage**, three low-rise structures located on the south side of West 66th Street, between Columbus Avenue and Central Park West.

### LANDMARKS

The special district contains three buildings designated as landmarks by the New York City Landmark Preservation Commission: the Sofia Warehouse; the First Battery Armory; and the Century Apartments. In addition, the southern portion of the Central Park West Historic District falls within the district. It should also be noted that the Lincoln Center complex, or its individual buildings, would be candidates for designation in the near future.

### OTHER PLANNING INITIATIVES

Community Board 7 and Landmark West!, a community organization, are currently studying the special district in response to the Lincoln Square development and other issues that have been raised by recent developments in the district. This effort is to include recommendations regarding zoning, urban design and pedestrian conditions.

## ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### LAND USE

Most of the district is zoned C4-7, which permits high density residential, commercial and community facility development with a base maximum FAR of 10, bonusable to 12. The district encourages retail uses compatible with the area by permitting those commercial uses allowed in the underlying district or listed in Use Group L. Use Group L comprises uses selected from those permitted in the C4-7 district which promote pedestrian oriented activity and serve visitors to the area. On any zoning lot fronting on Broadway, Columbus or Amsterdam avenues, the street frontage devoted to any permitted use is limited to 40 feet, unless the use is also listed in Use Group L, in which case there is no street frontage limitation.

Overall, the district can be characterized as mixed-use and conforms to the C4-7 designation: over a third of its land contains institutional uses such as Lincoln Center, Fordham University and other schools, and cultural and religious facilities. Residential use is found throughout the district, primarily in highrise apartments along Broadway, Columbus Avenue and Amsterdam Avenue, and in midrise buildings east of Broadway. Retail uses line Broadway, and occur less frequently on Columbus and Amsterdam avenues. Office uses are generally located in the southern part of the study area.

### *Issues*

The great majority of developments in the special district are predominately residential, with only limited amounts of commercial and/or community facility uses. In contrast, the Lincoln Square project now under construction will contain about 5 FAR of retail, movie and health club uses (plus another 1 FAR of below-grade, commercial use). The intensity of activity generated by this concentration of commercial uses greatly exceeds that of more typical district buildings which average about 1 FAR of commercial use. The amount and type of commercial use permitted by the current regulations is one of the major issues that needs to be addressed.

Among the issues raised by the Lincoln Square project are the space allocated to movie theaters and the traffic generated by these and other intense commercial uses. Currently, the district contains approximately 13,000 seats in Lincoln Center's major theaters and 1,700 movie theater seats. Just south of the district is the 500-seat Paramount movie theater. The 10 movie theaters under construction in the Lincoln Square project will add 4,000 more seats by 1994. Due to the fact that theaters typically require double height or higher spaces, theater complexes are relatively hollow spaces, containing less floor area than residential or other commercial spaces would normally have in the same volume. These hollow spaces

In addition, an analysis of the distribution of floor area within the Broadway buildings envelopes was performed. This reveals a direct relationship between the height of the buildings and the amount of floor area located below 150 feet. For example, 1991 Broadway (263 feet) and Checquers (264 feet) are both 26 stories tall and 1995 Broadway (192 feet) is 18 stories. The amount of floor area located below 150 feet in these projects is 60, 63 and 87 percent respectively.

In comparison, when a lower percentage of bulk is located below 150 feet, buildings are higher. For instance, in 1 Lincoln Plaza (42 stories, 419 feet), 2 Lincoln Square (36 stories, 362 feet) and 30 Lincoln Plaza (32 stories, 298 feet), the corresponding amount of floor area located below 150 feet is 45, 48 and 49 percent. In an extreme case, the new Lincoln Square building will rise to 46 stories or 525 feet in height, with only 42 percent its bulk located below 150 feet. This is largely due to almost 125,000 square feet of movie theater uses, which create hollow spaces that substantially add to the mass and height of the building.

In order to foster a positive relationship between the tower and base and a more successful massing of a development's bulk, and to avoid excessive height, as in the Lincoln Square project, the Department proposes the following:

- o Maintain the current controls requiring an 85 foot high base along Broadway, to relate to existing special district development and Lincoln Center. Towers should continue to be setback from the streetline for a minimum of 15 feet on wide streets and a minimum of 20 feet on narrow streets.
- o Establish envelope controls to govern the massing and height of new buildings throughout the district. The proposed regulation would require a minimum of 60 percent of a development's total floor area to be located below an elevation of 150 feet. This regulation, "Packing-the-Bulk," results in a better relationship between the base and tower portions of buildings, producing building heights ranging from the mid-20 to 30 stories.