

March 13, 2019

STATEMENT OF THE NEW YORK LANDMARKS CONSERVANCY BEFORE THE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION REGARDING THE PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL TOWER MECHANICAL VOIDS TEXT AMENDMENT, N190230 ZRY

Good morning Chair Lago and Commissioners. I am Peg Breen, speaking for the New York Landmarks Conservancy.

The Conservancy is pleased that the Department of City Planning has heard the voices of elected officials, advocates, and residents from across the City, who have seen out-of-scale, out-of-context buildings rise in their neighborhoods. These towers bend the intentions of the Zoning Resolution with voids, stilts, and gerrymandered or sculpted zoning lots, among other loopholes.

This amendment addresses one of the most egregious examples by limiting excessive mechanical voids in residential buildings in some communities. This amendment is a welcome first step. But it is still too permissive. We ask you to reduce the void height to 12' and increase the interval between eligible voids to 200'.

The Department has promised to come back later this year to expand the area that the amendment covers. We ask you to expand the mandate. It should include commercial as well as residential buildings. It should be City-wide. It should look at all of the ways that developers manipulate zoning to boost building heights such as multiple voids, stilts, outdoor spaces and patios and count them against FAR.

We always hear that developers need certainty. Residents do as well. We urge you to come back with a more holistic amendment that creates comprehensive certainty and predictability in zoning.

Thank you for the opportunity to express the Conservancy's views.