

# Section 1:

# Land Use and the Built Environment

As the Bloomberg administration drew to a close, construction activity was showing signs of recovery from the recession and housing crash. The number of new construction projects, albeit still below pre-boom levels, increased for the second consecutive year, with new developments starting across all boroughs. Meanwhile, the experience of Superstorm Sandy in 2012 resulted in an increased focus on waterfront and resilience planning across New York City.

## 1.

### Housing construction activity increased, and newly planned buildings grew larger.

Development activity continued on an upward trajectory in 2013. Figure 1.1 shows that 12,131 residential units were authorized by new building permits—an increase of 35 percent over the previous year—and 12,477 units were issued certificates of occupancy—an increase of 32 percent over the previous year. Despite these increases, housing construction still remained below levels seen before the housing boom, when over 15,000 new housing units were authorized by building permits each year.

Construction activity was greatest in Brooklyn and Queens. However, new development was also pronounced in the north and central sections of the Bronx (see Figure 1.2), where permits were issued for several large, subsidized housing developments. While permitting activity was distributed throughout all five boroughs, there were concentrations of activity in a few community districts: Greenpoint/Williamsburg (BK 01) and Fort Greene/Brooklyn Heights (BK 02) in Brooklyn; the Upper West Side (MN 07) in Manhattan; and Woodside/Sunnyside (QN 02, including Long Island City) in Queens.

As Figure 1.4 shows, planned construction activity in 2013 was dominated by medium and large projects. Of all the new units authorized by building permits issued in 2013, 72 percent were to be in buildings with 50 or more units, the highest share in the past 10 years.

## 2.

### Neighborhood rezonings affected hundreds of additional blocks.

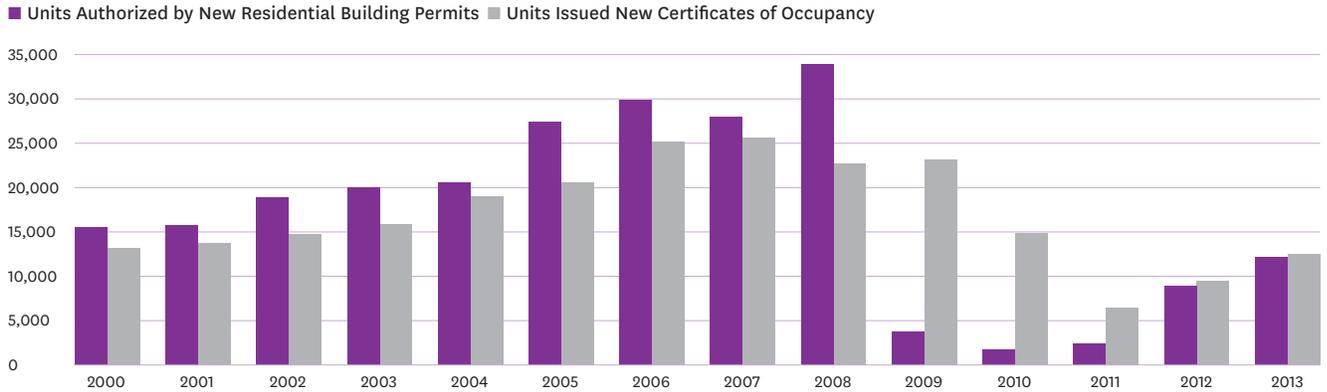
By the end of the Bloomberg administration, the Department of City Planning had initiated about 127 neighborhood zoning map changes that collectively rezoned large swaths of the city. Five of these rezonings, covering the areas shown in Figure 1.3, were adopted in 2013, the last year of the administration. As Figure 1.5 shows, these rezonings affected twice as many blocks as the relatively modest level of rezoning activity in 2012. The three largest actions in 2013 took place in Queens: Bellerose-Floral Park-Glen Oaks (QN 13, 411 blocks), East Elmhurst (QN 04, 127 blocks), and Ozone Park (QN 09 and QN 10, 530 blocks).

For all three of the Queens rezonings, the Department of City Planning cited preservation of “neighborhood character” as the motivation for the actions.<sup>1</sup> In each area, the new zoning requires new development on residential side streets that is consistent with the existing predominantly single-family or two-family housing stock and limits larger development and commercial uses to established mixed-use corridors.

The Department of City Planning also cited “neighborhood character” as a motivation for significant rezonings

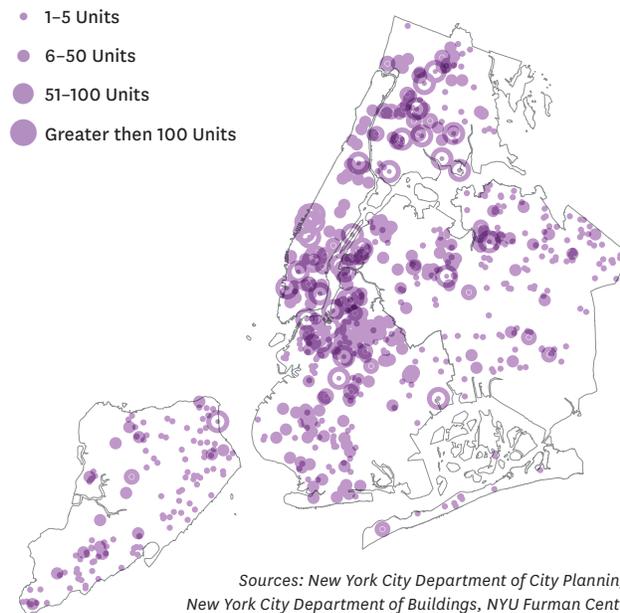
<sup>1</sup> For more information, see: 1. New York City Department of City Planning (24 June, 2013). Bellerose—Floral Park—Glen Oaks Rezoning—Overview. Retrieved from [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/belle\\_floral/index.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/belle_floral/index.shtml). 2. New York City Department of City Planning (30 October, 2013). East Elmhurst Rezoning—Overview. Retrieved from [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/east\\_elmhurst/index.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/east_elmhurst/index.shtml). 3. New York City Department of City Planning (10 December, 2013). Ozone Park Rezoning—Overview. Retrieved from [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/ozone\\_park/index.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/ozone_park/index.shtml).

**Figure 1.1: Residential Units Authorized by New Building Permits and Completed Units Issued Certificates of Occupancy, New York City**

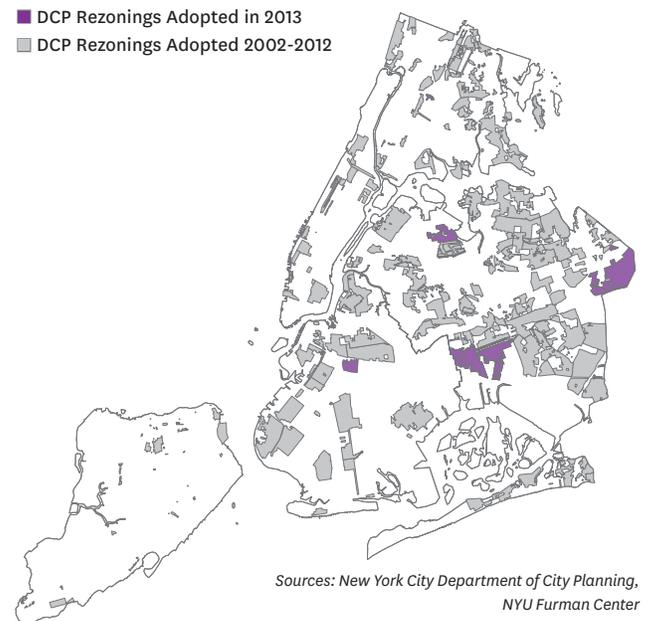


Sources: New York City Department of Buildings, New York City Department of City Planning, NYU Furman Center

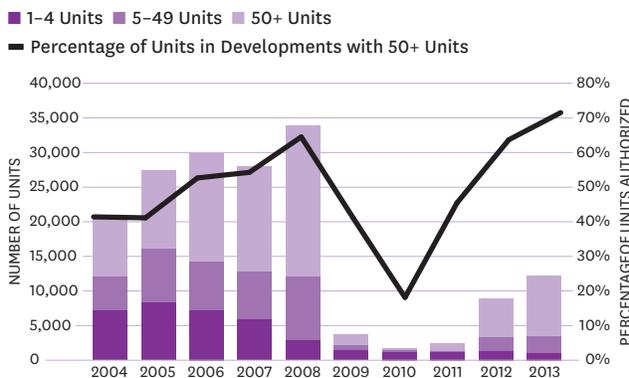
**Figure 1.2: Locations of Residential Units Authorized by New Building Permits, 2013**



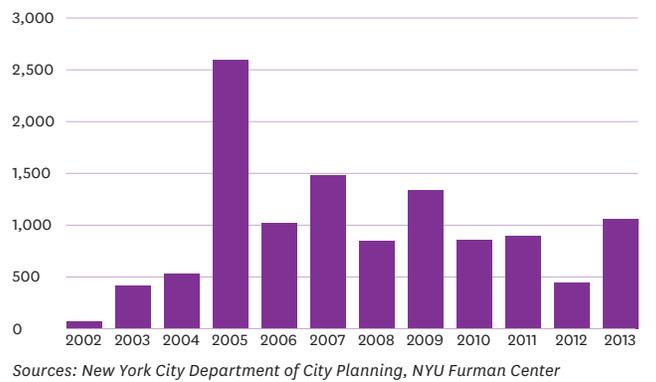
**Figure 1.3: New York City Department of City Planning (DCP)-Initiated Rezoning, 2002-2013**



**Figure 1.4: Residential Units Authorized by New Building Permits by Property Size, New York City**



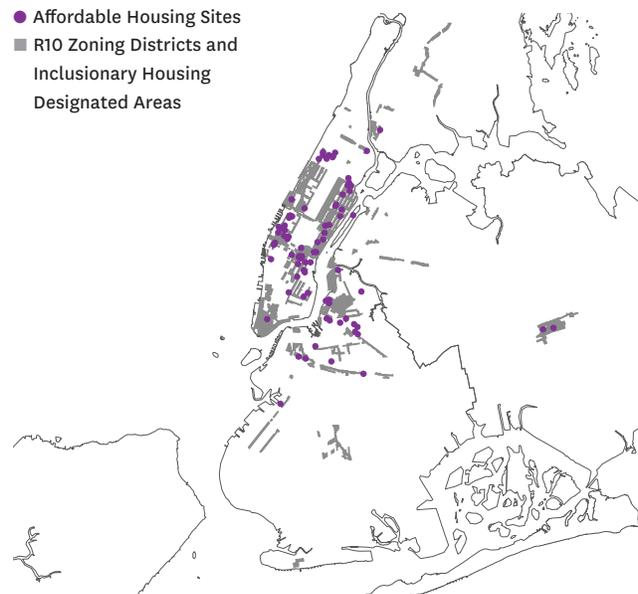
**Figure 1.5: Number of Blocks Rezoned by Year, New York City**



## Where Does New York City's Inclusionary Housing Program Apply?

Since 1987, the city's zoning code has allowed developers in certain parts of the city to build larger projects than zoning otherwise permits in exchange for providing affordable housing. The policy applies in R10 zoning districts throughout the city (the highest density type of residential district, located primarily in Manhattan), as well as in several "Designated Areas" specified in the zoning code. To earn the density bonus for a project in these eligible areas, developers can build affordable housing as part of their primary project ("on-site") or build, rehabilitate, or preserve affordable housing elsewhere in the same community district or, if within a half mile of the project using the density bonus, in an adjacent community district ("off-site"). (Expanding this Inclusionary Housing Program was a much-discussed topic in the recent Mayoral campaign.) Figure 1.6 shows in which parts of the city the Inclusionary Housing Program currently applies and the locations of the roughly 100 affordable housing sites that have been developed at least in part through the program since its inception.

**Figure 1.6: Affordable Housing Sites Developed or Preserved under the Inclusionary Housing Program, 1987-2013, and Inclusionary Housing-Eligible Areas, 2013**



Sources: New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, New York City Department of City Planning, NYU Furman Center

of parts of Crown Heights, Brooklyn (BK 08, 55 blocks) and the neighborhood surrounding East Fordham Road in the Bronx (BX 06, 12 blocks). However, these rezonings also designated portions of the affected neighborhoods to be eligible for the city's Inclusionary Housing Program (see sidebar *Where Does New York City's Inclusionary Housing Program Apply?*), permitting higher density development in exchange for affordable housing.<sup>2</sup>

Although there were no zoning map changes in Manhattan in 2013, the City Council adopted a noteworthy text amendment governing parking regulations and requirements for the Manhattan Core (defined as the area below 110th Street on the west side of Central Park and below 96th Street on the east side of Central Park; community districts MN 01-MN 08) to address changing travel and development patterns and promote more efficient use of the area's dwindling supply of parking spaces.

For example, to add greater flexibility to the existing parking supply, the new regulations allow operators of parking facilities that were originally built to accommodate residents of specific residential buildings to (legally) serve commuters and other city visitors, too. And in response to technological innovation in the parking industry, the text change created an alternative set of design standards for automated parking facilities, which rely on elevators and lifts to efficiently stack cars on trays, rather than human drivers and conventional ramps and parking spaces.<sup>3</sup>

## 3. The city designated more historic districts and landmarks.

In 2013, the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) designated a new historic district in the South Village in Manhattan, extended the West End-Collegiate Historic District in Manhattan, and extended the Bedford-Stuyvesant Historic District in Brooklyn. Although there were only three historic district designation actions in 2013, they affected

<sup>2</sup> For more information, see: 1. New York City Department of City Planning (24 September, 2013). Crown Heights West Rezoning—Overview. Retrieved from [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/crown\\_heights\\_west/index.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/crown_heights_west/index.shtml). 2. New York City Department of City Planning (9 October, 2013). Retrieved from [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/east\\_fordham\\_road/index.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/east_fordham_road/index.shtml).

<sup>3</sup> For more information, see: New York City Department of City Planning (8 May, 2013). Retrieved from [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/mn\\_core/mn\\_core\\_text\\_amendment.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/mn_core/mn_core_text_amendment.shtml).

a large number of lots as shown in Figure 1.7, consistent with the scale of designations in the two previous years.

Newly designated individual landmarks were located mainly in Manhattan and Brooklyn, but also included historic firehouses in the Bronx. LPC also designated two interiors: the Bronx General Post Office, and the Steinway & Sons showroom on West 57th Street in Manhattan. No landmarks were designated in Queens or Staten Island.

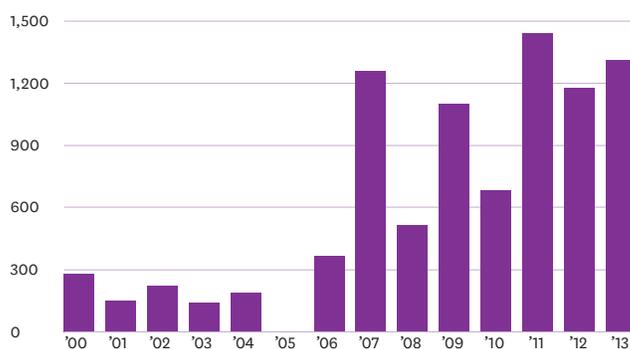
## 4.

### As recovery from Superstorm Sandy continued, New York City pursued new climate adaptation strategies.

Near the end of 2012, following the devastation of Superstorm Sandy, the Bloomberg administration implemented several emergency regulatory measures to allow the recovery process to begin. To plan its longer term response, the city established the Special Initiative for Rebuilding and Resiliency (SIRR), tasked with preparing for and protecting against the impacts of climate change. In June 2013, SIRR released a final report presenting recommendations both for rebuilding the communities affected by Sandy and increasing the resilience of infrastructure and buildings citywide.<sup>4</sup> Recommended measures included direct funding (up to \$1 billion) for the rebuilding of Sandy-damaged properties as well as the creation of new subsidy programs to encourage property owners to retrofit existing buildings to meet new flood insurance rate reduction criteria and promote resiliency. Many of the initiatives proposed by SIRR focused on the 67,700 buildings located within the map boundaries of the new preliminary 100-year floodplain (see Figure 1.8). The SIRR report charged the Mayor's Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability with implementing the measures recommended in the report.

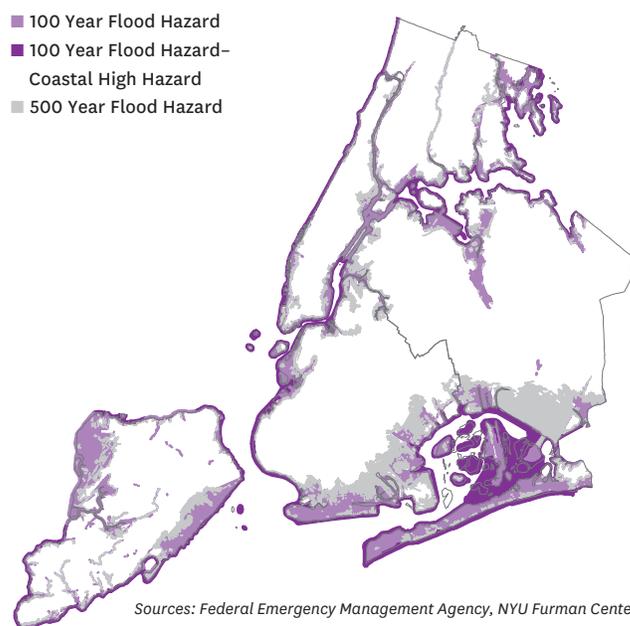
Another key element of the city's rebuilding and resiliency effort was the adoption of a significant zoning text amendment in 2013. Among other things, the amendment allows retrofit buildings and new construction in flood-prone areas greater design flexibility—with respect to building height, access from the exterior, and

Figure 1.7: Number of Lots Added to Historic Districts, New York City



Sources: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, NYU Furman Center

Figure 1.8: Preliminary Flood Hazard Areas, December 2013



Sources: Federal Emergency Management Agency, NYU Furman Center

location of parking and mechanical systems—to allow buildings to more easily meet local, state, and federal resiliency requirements.<sup>5</sup>

As the city continues to study its vulnerability to climate change, and as other new information becomes available (including new federal Flood Insurance Rate Maps anticipated in 2015), the city plans to adopt additional resiliency measures. For additional information about the challenges the city faces in becoming more resilient, see the forthcoming NYU Furman Center report about retrofitting existing buildings. ■

<sup>4</sup> The final SIRR report is available at: New York City Special Initiative for Rebuilding and Resiliency (11 June, 2013). Retrieved from <http://www.nyc.gov/html/sirr/html/report/report.shtml>.

<sup>5</sup> For additional information about the text amendment, see: New York City Department of City Planning (9 October, 2013). Retrieved from [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/flood\\_resiliency/index.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/flood_resiliency/index.shtml).