

# Housing Quality Zoning

## New York City, New York



Street level facades should be alive and active (bottom), not dead (top).



### Legislative Standards for Urban Design

New York City's Board of the Planning and Urban Design Commission established the Housing Quality Zoning Regulations to provide a framework for the design of residential buildings in the City of New York. The regulations are intended to ensure that residential buildings are designed to be compatible with the surrounding urban environment and to provide a high quality of housing for the City's residents.

The regulations are organized into four categories: Neighborhood Impact, Recreation Space, Safety and Security, and Apartments. Each category contains a set of program elements, each with a goal and a set of objective and measurable performance standards.

### Neighborhood Impact

	Built Up	Non Built Up
A Street Wall Length	4.00	6.00
B Street Wall Height	4.00	N.A.
C Ground Floor Activity	4.00	5.00
D Building Height	2.15	N.A.
E Street Trees	2.85	4.00
F Off-Site Sunlight	8.00	10.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	

### Recreation Space

A Type & Size	9.80
B On-Site Sunlight	5.80
C Landscaping	3.20
D Visibility of Parking	3.20
E Open Parking	
F Trees	3.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>

### Safety and Security

A Density of Public Corridor	5.40
B Visibility - Public Space to Elevator Door	4.50
C Visibility - Private Outdoor Space from Lobby	4.50
D Surveillance from Apartments	3.80
E Entry of Building from Parking Garage or Lot	2.60
F Vehicular Separation	2.10
H Visibility - Elevator Door to Apartment Door	2.10
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>

### Apartments

A Size of Apartment	4.70
B Sunlight in Apartment	3.85
C Window Size	3.85
D Visual Privacy On-Site	3.80
E Visual Privacy Off-Site	2.10
F Through Ventilation	2.10
G Daylight in Public Corridors	1.80
H Prom, Bicycle & Bulk Storage	1.60
I Waste Storage Facilities	1.40
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>

Housing Quality Zoning (HQZ) was directed by Michael Kwartler for the NYC Urban Design Council in 1975 and sets out an alternative to the conventional zoning legislated in the 1961 Zoning Resolution. Since 1961, the design of residential developments had been heavily influenced by New York's Zoning Resolution, which prescribed the tower-in-the-park form of development. However, as a result of the work of the Urban Design Council, it was revealed that the one-size-fits-all prescribed in the requirements of the 1961 Zoning Resolution actually detracted from the human scale and character of the City's traditional neighborhoods.

Briefly, Housing Quality Zoning is a set of 26 guidelines or program elements divided into four categories. The categories are Neighborhood Impact, Security and Safety, Recreation Space and Building Interior which contain program elements. Each program element contains a goal and a set of objective and measurable performance standards which met to determine the degree of compliance with the goal. Partial compliance, measured as a percentage, receives a point score somewhat less than the maximum. The system is based on permitting maximum flexibility and insuring a high level of minimum quality requiring only a passing score of 85 points not 100 points. This framework is a system of which quickly and objectively establishes the degree of compliance a building has with clearly stated planning and design objectives. Recognizing that design is a series of trade-offs, HQZ permits the architect or developer to choose which components of quality to emphasize over others as dictated by unique conditions such as marketing, neighborhood or site conditions.

Housing Quality Zoning was adopted in 1976 by the New York City Planning Commission and was the city's first performance-based regulations. It is featured in An Introduction to Urban Design (Barnett), received a Progressive Architecture Design Award in 1974, and has become the model for contextual zoning in NYC ("Quality Housing").

**Client:**  
Urban Design Council  
Mayor's Office  
City of New York

**Director:**  
Michael Kwartler

**Completed:**  
1976 (Adopted)