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Int. No. 155

By Council Members Reyna, Baez, Boyland, Dilan, Felder, Fidler, Gerson, Jackson, Martinez, Monserrate, Nelson, Reed, Yassky and Moskowitz; also Council Members Vann, Sanders and Quinn

A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York in relation to establishing a task force on affordable housing.

Be it enacted by the Council as follows:

Section 1. Declaration of legislative intent. The Council finds that the City is in severe need of “affordable housing” and that the City has failed to implement affirmative policies to encourage the development of “affordable housing” on a large-scale basis. The Council finds that planning for such affordable housing, and its subsequent production, will increase the quality of life in the City and the availability of affordable housing units will help to alleviate homelessness, will help to provide jobs, will help to retain certain businesses and employers in the City and will help to attract potential businesses to the City. The failure to begin such planning is shortsighted and will result in missed opportunities for the start of construction and rehabilitation of this type of housing.

The Council also finds that the rising cost of construction in the City further hinders efforts to produce affordable housing. The Council finds that any long-term, large-scale plan to encourage the development of affordable housing must address the rise of construction costs in the City so that affordable housing production is economically viable in the City. Furthermore, since the City has a shortage of available land, the City would benefit from the redevelopment of areas, such as “brownfields” and underutilized waterfront land, that has been idle for many years.

Brownfields are typically underutilized or abandoned sites that were or are used for industrial or commercial purposes and are now environmentally contaminated. Brownfields often pose environmental and economic burdens upon communities which can hamper the redevelopment of those neighborhoods. With proper planning, commitment and government involvement, certain brownfield sites can be redeveloped as affordable housing.

Much of the City’s waterfront is zoned for manufacturing use because manufacturing and heavy industrial uses historically needed access to the waterfront. In many areas, however, the waterfront is no longer being used for water-dependent uses and could more appropriately be used for affordable housing.

There is also a need to work with employers and unions to encourage the development of employer-assisted housing. This will help the City retain employers and assist in helping the City and businesses remain competitive in this economy. Hospitals and universities, for example, need to provide affordable housing for their residents and post-doctoral fellows in order to remain competitive.

Therefore, the Council declares that the time to address the City’s housing shortage is now and hereby establishes this task force on affordable housing to examine, plan and coordinate the development of affordable housing in the City.

§2. Task force on affordable housing. a. There is hereby established a task force on affordable housing, to examine, plan and coordinate the development of affordable housing which shall consist of twelve members. The task force shall include as ex-officio members the commissioner of buildings, the chair of the

city planning commission, the commissioner of design and construction, the commissioner of housing preservation and development, the commissioner of environmental protection and the speaker of the council, each of whom may select a designee, and six members of the public.

The members of the public shall consist of two representatives of tenants, one representative of the for-profit real estate industry, one representative of the not-for-profit real estate industry and two representatives of community-based housing organizations. The mayor shall appoint one representative of tenants, one representative of the for-profit real estate industry and one representative of a community-based housing organization. The speaker of the council shall appoint one representative of tenants, one representative of the not-for-profit real estate industry and one representative of a community-based housing organization. The members of the task force shall be appointed within thirty days of the effective date of this section. Each member shall serve without compensation and shall continue in service until their successors have been appointed. A member may be removed by the appointing authority for cause, but not without an opportunity to be heard in person or by counsel, in his or her defense, upon less than ten days notice.

b. The task force may appoint an executive director to serve at its pleasure and may employ or retain such other employees and consultants as are necessary to fulfill its functions within appropriations by the council for such purposes.

c. Within thirty days after the appointment of the last member of the task force, the task force shall establish separate study groups consisting of task force members to study the current building and fire codes, mechanisms to fund the construction of affordable housing, mechanisms to fund the remediation of brownfield sites for redevelopment as housing including mixed-use developments, mechanisms to identify, rezone and fund the redevelopment of underutilized waterfront land for affordable housing, methods to reduce the cost of construction in the City, and methods to address and remedy illegal conversions to housing.

d. Within twelve months after the appointment of the last member of the task force, the task force shall issue an interim report to the mayor and the council. The interim report shall contain specific

recommendations with respect to the areas listed below and shall include an assessment of the fiscal implications of each such recommendation. Recommendations shall be made with respect to:

1. Identification and prioritization of all vacant and underutilized sites, both public and private;
2. Identification of brownfield sites suitable for affordable housing or mixed-use development;
3. Identification of all waterfront sites suitable for affordable housing or mixed-use development;
4. Identification of sites, including but not limited to waterfront sites, suitable for rezoning for residential use;
5. Amendments to the building code that would facilitate and reduce the costs associated with residential development;
6. Methods to update applicable procedures which address illegal occupancies, including procedures to facilitate the curing of illegal occupancies where possible; and
7. Mechanisms to encourage the development of employer-assisted housing.

e. Within twelve months after the issuance of the interim report to the mayor and the council and every year thereafter, the task force shall assess the progress of the City with regards to the development of affordable housing and shall issue an annual report with recommendations for further development and improvement.

- §3. This local law shall take effect thirty days after it shall have been enacted into law.