

Zuccotti Favors City Zoning Review

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community groups calling for "down-zoning" Although the various zoning categories are complex, they have a major effect on
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City Planning Commission chairman John Zuccotti said today he favored an extensive review of the 12-year-old citywide zoning ordinance "to bring it up to date."

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In an interview following his reappointment last week by Mayor-elect Beame, Zuccotti said it would be up to Beame to decide whether the lengthy revision process should be undertaken.

"The present ordinance was passed in 1961 and it's now 1973," Zuccotti said. "I would favor a look at the entire ordinance in an attempt to bring it up to date."

He said he had not yet conferred with Beame on the matter.

Whether Beame would approve such a move is uncertain. The revision process might well open a Pandora's box of political problems, with developers demanding higher-density zoning and

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life in the city neighborhoods by stipulating what can and cannot be built.

The last comprehensive review of zoning law was a three-year study, begun in the late 1950s, that culminated in the 1961 zoning resolution.

The 1961 ordinance, which replaced the law enacted 45 years earlier, mapped every area of the city as commercial, residential or industrial.

Within each category, it is specified what type of structure can be built, and at what density. An R-10 designation on Third Av., for example, means that a high-rise residential building can be constructed.

But Zuccotti said: "The mapping instrument, in our opinion, doesn't recognize the fine grain and the diversity of different areas and different streets of the city."

He said this was as major reason why the Planning Commission has in recent years resorted to the creation of "special zoning districts," which he called "a finer tool for achieving better planning."

While some of these districts, such as the just-passed Madison Av. Preservation District, have met with neighborhood approval, others have come under strong criticism for allegedly giving the developers too many concessions in return for too few amenities.

In effect, the special district is a means of amending the zone ordinance without implementing a total revision.

Zuccotti did not indicate what a new zoning ordinance might look like. But it is likely to include some innovations, such as the mixed manufacturing - residential neighborhood, and to make provision for special districts and possibly even periodic review of the zoning resolution.

If a zoning review is undertaken, it is also certain that there will be a far greater community involvement than in 1961, when there was relatively little neighborhood activism and the local planning boards were in their formative stage.