

Chair Dan Garodnick
City Planning Commission
120 Broadway
New York, NY 10271

February 7, 2024

RE: Open Plans Testimony to the City Planning Commission in Support of the Green Fast Track for Housing

Open Plans writes to express our support for the proposed amendment to Chapter 5 of the City Planning Commission's rules to exempt certain housing and related actions from review under SEQRA and CEQR procedures, also known as the Green Fast Track for Housing. Open Plans is a nonprofit organization with the mission to create a livable city for all New Yorkers. We promote a people-first street culture that prioritizes community, safety, joy, mobility and empowerment.

A modern city can't operate under clunky policies that hinder good progress. Too often environmental review is weaponized to block projects that would objectively be good for the environment, from housing projects to transit and public space projects. These outdated environmental review laws are making it harder to address our overlapping housing and climate crises by imposing unnecessary costs and delays on climate-friendly housing projects.

By taking a critical eye to environmental review, this proposal will fast-track projects that help us reach urgent climate, housing, and livability goals. With this reform, the environmental review process can work as intended, setting important climate standards while encouraging beneficial development. The result is a streamlined government that can better respond to the needs of New Yorkers.

This reform is a good first step that will make a positive difference while not making major changes:

- To be eligible, a project must have fewer than 250 units (in a high density area) or 175 (in lower density areas).
- The building must be all-electric; it can't be near polluting sources; and it can't cast shadows on sunlight sensitive sources. A project also has to go through rigorous health and safety screening.
- But if it meets these criteria, it will have a shortened timeline (about 50% shorter). This reform will avoid months and years of delay, and tens of thousands in costs, associated with needless review.

Open Plans urges the City Planning Commission to approve the proposed amendment, Green Fast Track for Housing, as one piece of the puzzle to building a livable city.

Sincerely,

Sara Lind, Co-Executive Director