

City seeks to revoke access to rooftops made for employee mingling

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Rendering of L&L Holding Company's planned rooftop terrace at 390 Madison Avenue

To give workers a comfortable and conducive work space, some companies have outfitted their offices with amenities like on-site fitness centers, free coffee and outdoor space. However, the city's Department of Buildings has launched a campaign to stop or delay these rooftop terraces on office towers, claiming the spaces can only be used for plants, not people. As the New York Post reported, DOB may not approve office terrace plans and may even rescind already approved plans.

The department is citing a zoning law from 1961 that was meant to stop a large increase of outdoor flea markets from popping up and which states that "all uses must be contained within enclosed buildings." DOB's new interpretation of the law has stopped or delayed many major projects, including the Durst Organization's 1155 Sixth Avenue tower, which had planned to add roof and setback terraces as part of a \$110 million improvement project. A spokesperson for the Durst Organization, Jordan Barowitz, told the Post: "Access to outdoor space is a critical component of a healthy work environment and a vital part of sustainable development as well as a major recruitment tool for New York's businesses."

First Deputy Commissioner Thomas Fariello is leading the department's campaign to challenge whether or not a roof can support a certain weight. Michael Slattery of the Real Estate Board of New York, a group that represents real estate professionals, has urged the Department of City Planning to "convince the DOB that what we're asking is well within the scope of what zoning allows."

When asked for a comment, the DOB and DCP told the Post: "We are aware of the questions that have been raised regarding roof terraces and we are working together to arrive at a solution that supports both safety and clarity."

Terraces that are either currently under construction or planned include L&L Holding Co.'s 390 Madison Avenue and 425 Park Avenue; Related Companies' 55 Hudson Yards; Silverstein Properties' 3 World Trade Center; and SL Green's Midtown supertall One Vanderbilt.