

BUSINESS

City cracks down on oversized Soho retailers

By **Melissa Klein**

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The city has cracked down on oversized Soho shops that have operated for years despite zoning laws prohibiting the mammoth retailers.

The city Department of Buildings slapped five stores — Zara, Uniqlo, Hollister, Topshop and American Eagle — with violations for exceeding the 10,000-square-foot limit in the area.

Residents have long complained that the stores are bad neighbors with excessively bright lighting, noisy nighttime deliveries and special events that draw excessive crowds.

And city officials, including City Councilwoman Margaret Chin and Borough President Gale Brewer, have been asking the Buildings Department to take action for years. The Post reported on the problem in December.

"I am pleased to see that some of the most egregious violators of the ban on oversized retail in SoHo are being held accountable," Chin told The Post Friday.

The violators face hearings and possible fines beginning at \$800.

Pete Davies, a Soho resident, said the DOB action was unprecedented, but was worried it would lead to nothing.

"That's our concern, this is just going to be a tiny little slap on the hand and nothing changes," he said.

Retailers are supposed to secure special permits from the city Planning Commission for the oversize stores. Banana Republic, a 67,440-square-foot store on Broadway, is one of the few giant clothing shops that received the permit.

Area residents were particularly galled when Nike opened a 55,000-square-foot superstore on Broadway at Spring Street last year. To get around the 10,000 square foot limit, it declared itself a "sporting or athletic store" rather than a clothing retailer.

The Buildings Department is conducting an ongoing audit of the larger retailers.



Topshop in Soho
Helayne Seidman

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