

## **SUMMARY OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTS**

### *Commercial, Cultural and Residential Development*

- A redevelopment strategy should leverage 125<sup>th</sup> Street's distinct identity: it is like no other Manhattan cross-town street.
- Economic development activities should combine zoning policy changes, which would encourage physical redevelopment, and ongoing programs, which would facilitate job creation and small business development.
- A revised zoning policy is needed to encourage new development. There are opportunities to increase densities to encourage new commercial, cultural, and residential uses. Current zoning rules stifle development: professional developers need more incentive to redevelop.
- A mix of retail uses, including small businesses unique to Harlem and national brand-name retail, is critical to the ongoing development of 125<sup>th</sup> Street as a strong commercial corridor.
- New office space is needed, including a mix of market rate Class A space and affordable office space. A range of office sizes are needed, including 30,000+ sq ft space for large businesses and 10,000 sq ft. space for smaller businesses. All office space along the corridor should meet modern technology needs.
- Speculation and abandonment are substantial problems. Owners of these properties have been unresponsive to purchase offers.
- New cultural and entertainment uses, specifically a new 1,500 seat performance space, are critical. A cultural district may be appropriate.
- New market-rate residential and commercial redevelopment may cause displacement. The city must ensure the development of affordable housing and affordable office space. There may be an opportunity to have market-rate housing or commercial development to subsidize smaller, more affordable spaces. There may also be an opportunity to provide affordable artist housing near a new cultural space.
- New commercial and office developments on 125<sup>th</sup> Street should facilitate new career opportunities for Harlem residents.

### *Built Character*

- Higher density may be appropriate, but there needs to be a coherent, balanced zoning strategy for the entire corridor.
- A 125<sup>th</sup> Street Special District may be beneficial. The district could regulate lighting, storefront design, materials, signage and other elements that could create a consistent 125<sup>th</sup> Street identity.
- Proposed zoning districts should recognize the differing built character along 125<sup>th</sup> Street.
- The study should include an inventory of historic buildings. References to historic buildings and uses could be incorporated into tourism or streetscape initiatives. Certain buildings may be worth preserving.

### *Traffic, Transit, and Pedestrian Circulation*

- Parking is a major concern: there is chronic double parking which causes congestion. Retail businesses and tourism companies need adequate parking.
- Planning efforts should focus on developing night-time pedestrian activities throughout the 125<sup>th</sup> Street corridor. Examples range from better lighting to new cultural attractions.

- Cross-town transit is problematic, despite the several bus lines that go along 125<sup>th</sup> Street. The city should investigate the possibility of introducing cross town transit service, including dedicated bus lanes, trolleys, and light-rail.
- Sidewalks throughout the entire corridor should be better lit at night. Lighting improvements at the eastern and western extremes of the corridor should be prioritized.
- Pedestrian travel is impaired due to street furniture and vendors.
- Connections to Randall's Island can be improved. CIVITAS and Dept of Parks are working on proposal for a pedestrian bridge.
- A signage system that incorporates historic and cultural references could improve the pedestrian experience and promote 125<sup>th</sup> Street's identity.

*Study Process and Follow-up*

- Private sector stakeholders, including property owners and business representatives, must participate in the 125<sup>th</sup> Street discussion.
- The study must address the interests and unmet needs of tourists, consumers, businesses and residents.