

## Section 1

## 1.1. Introduction

At the close of 2004, members of Community Board 12-Manhattan (CB12) began to seek resources for conducting a neighborhood planning and land-use study covering all of Washington Heights and Inwood, the neighborhoods that make up “Northern Manhattan” and comprise Community District 12 (“CD12”). After consultation with city agency representatives and their elected officials, CB12’s officers and committee chairs determined that a broad-based, district-wide planning study would aid in identifying priorities and in establishing consensus around a set of criteria for evaluating proposed and future development. Reflecting on trends of the past decades, and the fact no complete review of the land use issues had taken place for more than 25 years, CB12 sought guidance in assessing current conditions towards advising on policy priorities and responding to proposed actions that come before them in the years to come.

CB12’s Land Use Committee has led the effort behind this “Neighborhood Planning and Land Use Study” on behalf of the Board. The study has been produced by The City College Architecture Center (CCAC), an outreach and technical assistance program of the School of Architecture, Urban Design and Landscape Architecture at The City College of New York, working in collaboration with Urban Planner Rex Curry of ReidCurry Consulting (the Project Team).

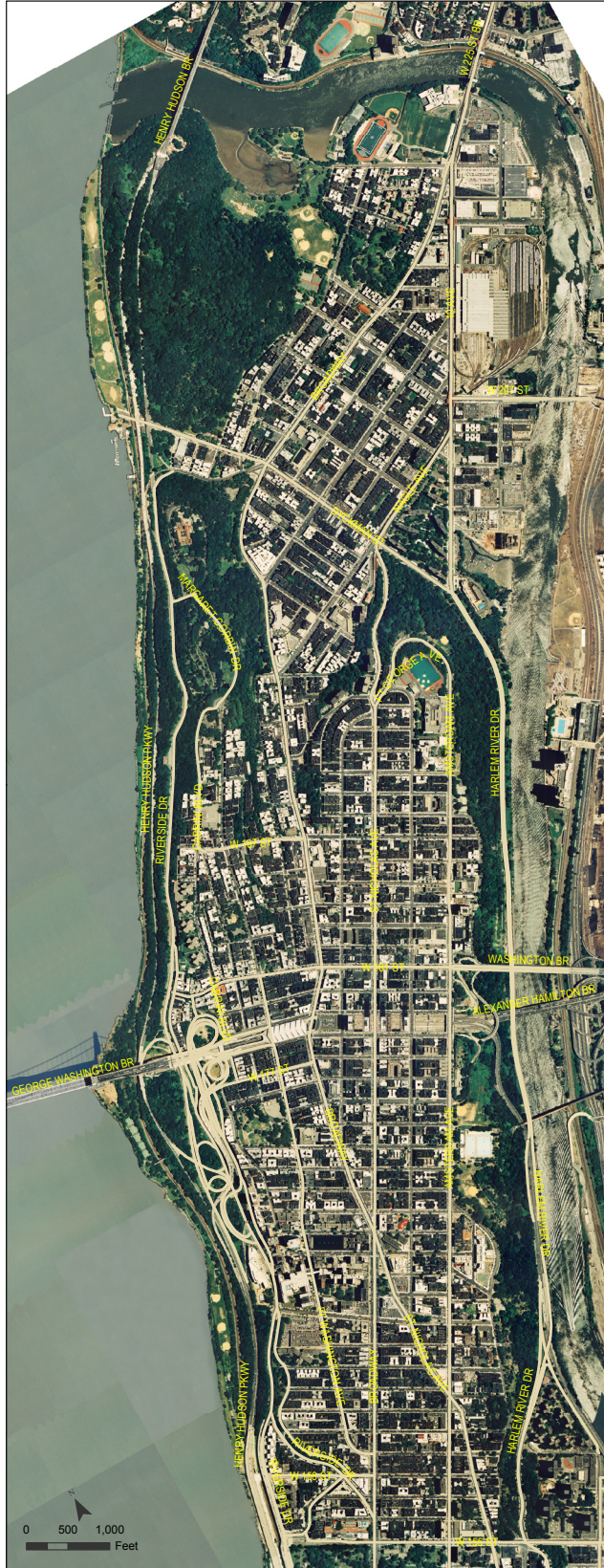
From fall 2005 to January 2007, the Project Team conducted research, field studies and public meetings to identify issues and define problems affecting CD12’s physical, social, and economic development, contributing to a set of recommendations contained herein. While the study recommends actions on a range of issues, it does not represent a unified or “comprehensive” plan for CD12. Rather, the main intent is to provide CB12, other community leaders and residents with background information and criteria for making action-plans of their own. The study seeks to enable groups of stakeholders concerned with a particular issue or location to weigh the potential impacts of proposed actions within the context of the district overall and against broader trends and policies.

### 1.1.1 Study Goals

The study goals emerged from the goals and objectives CB12 laid out in its original request-for-proposals in articulating its rationale for commissioning a district-wide planning study. Over the course of the study and in consultation with the Land Use Committee, the Project Team refined the language of these goals while seeking to address the original spirit of the RFP. The study seeks to address six goals, which informed the research and provided an organizing structure for this document:

1. Identify trends in the community and best practices for balanced community development—
  - Provide information on who lives in CD12 and what their needs are
  - Develop a framework of priorities and potential actions towards assisting CB12 in fulfilling its mission.
2. Foster development and preservation of affordable housing—
  - Encourage a mix of rental and ownership housing
  - Preserve the existing affordable housing inventory.
3. Locate sites/areas—and actions—meeting community needs

COMMUNITY DISTRICT 12-M  
AERIAL PHOTO



Source: NYCmap, Community Cartography



- Include locations for housing, education and other community facilities; expansion of small business and economic activity; culture and recreation.
4. Preserve and strengthen district character and quality of life—
    - Highlight community assets and resources
    - Safeguard against over development.
  5. Locate buildings and areas of special architectural or historic interest—
    - Identify buildings and districts for protection through landmark designation
    - Recommend alternative forms of protection or recognition.
  6. Update Zoning
    - Implement contextual zoning where appropriate
    - Reconcile existing zoning with actual land use and building form, while encouraging desired development patterns.

The report is organized around these goals which define the sections and chapters that follow. Section 1, Introduction, speaks to the planning process and methodology and provides an overview of previous studies. Section 2, Community Portrait, addresses Goals 1, 2 and 3 which primarily deal with the socioeconomic make-up and needs of the community. Section 3, Neighborhood Context, addresses Goals 4 and 5, which reflect concern for the physical environment as well as appreciation for the overall “quality of life” found in CD12. Section 4, The Environment for Preservation and Development, addresses Goal 6, Update Zoning, directly, while providing an assessment of current land-use and zoning in CD12 and offering a “framework” for replacing CD12’s outmoded 1961 zoning designations responding to the current physical and economic realities.

### 1.1.2 Planning, Public Action and Public Goods

In the pursuit of consensus, visions for the future become viable and attainable. The overarching goal of this study is to foster an informed dialogue on the issues confronting Northern Manhattan, towards some degree of consensus on what forces are at play. Achieving consensus requires broad participation and engagement by the diverse interests in a community. While challenging, the benefits of a shared vision are increased predictability and reduced risk of opposition for proposed developments (that comply with the expressed vision), as well as broadening the base of support in the continuing battle for a just a society.



In evaluating the community’s position towards a proposed development or change in land-use where some public action, such as a zoning change or use of public funds, is required, the question arises as to whether the public “good” or benefit produced is proportionate to the inducement being provided by policy action. Development in New York City commonly yields public goods beyond the primary function of the project—these include shared-use facilities such as public plazas or walkways; park improvements; investments in transit; com-

munity facilities or arrangements concerning employment or other services.

In the neighborhoods of New York City, housing is a social good in and of itself. It serves as a basis for a full range of economic activities in the larger community. It is necessary to draw distinctions between the value of affordable housing, as one example of a public good, and the perception of profitability to owners and developers. In establishing housing policies, the question is what public resources—land, funding either through direct expenditure or future debt, and political capital—are available to support that public good through manipulations in the private market, and what controls may be placed on the market without deterring investment completely.

For CD12, a community district that is primarily “built-out,” only a few major parcels or corridors provide the opportunity to consider negotiating for “exactions” or inducements related to new development that serve some community needs. These are locations where change in land-use or growth by private institutions, government authorities or private developers are likely. However, quantifying these tradeoffs and predicting outcomes is difficult. Furthermore, challenges remain in attaining the most oft-cited need—“preserving and developing affordable housing”—while absorbing the community’s share of the region’s growth and maintaining the qualities that make CD12 attractive to current residents.



An illustration comes in a September 2006 *New York Times* editorial endorses five conclusions of a joint report by the Regional Planning Association and the Citizen’s Housing and Planning Council entitled, “Balanced Housing for a Smart Region.” [SOURCE] The first, that three million people will be added to the region in the next

20 years, means that increased density within New York City’s borders is a given. The second, that fiscally sound municipal policy builds on high density with economic diversity implies that we cannot marginalize lower-income groups to the outer reaches of the region. Third, that “smart growth” policies encouraging walkable communities with access to most services, excellent mass transit and an attractive, dense, and well-built residential architecture contribute to the overall well-being of the region. The editorial concludes by echoing the report’s fourth and fifth points: that big government is not the problem, whereas too little government may be, and that the region’s myriad balkanized municipalities must recognize their interdependence and the need, at some level, for contemplating the region as a single organism; we are all in this together.<sup>1</sup>

By these criteria, Washington Heights/Inwood is a model community, key to serving the region’s housing needs and conserving its natural resources. Yet, CB12 is not a municipal government capable of making policies to protect its stock of affordable housing. Therefore, influencing citywide policy-making that affects the housing stock in CD12 is a valid priority. One of the top priorities should be a call for resources to protect and defend low- and moderate-income families from “free-market” forces, while reminding policy-makers of the valuable resources that mixed-income, working-class neighborhoods contribute to the overall economy.

### 1.1.3 Formation of a Working Group

When it comes to the activating the assets of a community as a lead resource for resolving the problems of its neighborhoods, there are no “experts”. CD12’s residents offer many layers of experience for solving problems well ahead of the onset of crisis conditions. In the early part of 2005, discussions in the community began to focus increasingly on “quality of life” concerns. Issues such as housing conditions and rent, the cost of running a small business, and the importance of producing continuing education resources that are attractive are all relevant and to reach into the full depth of community’s need.

This report seeks to contribute to this process by building a constituency for community planning. The facts are based on the U.S. Census (1990 and 2000) as developed and presented by sources such as the New York City Department of City Planning (NYC-DCP) and studies that draw extensively on the Housing Vacancy Survey (HVS) commissioned by DCP on a routine basis (every 2-3 years) following each decennial census. Census tracts define data for a geographic area. Nevertheless, differences in the presentation of facts such as total population occur from one source to another. These differences in a region the size of CD12 are marginal and should not detract from an overview of the major social and economic characteristics of the community.

The working group remains in formation as an informal planning body of the Land Use Committee of CB12. To serve this process, tools have been developed to assist an effective exchange of ideas and positions on issues that are based to greatest degree possible on accurate and reliable information. as a guide for discussion and decisions.

Ultimately, implementation depends on a reasonably equivalent level of planning. To this end, the products implemented and recorded in this report represent a combination of social concern and investment confidence. The ongoing challenge is the continuing development and maturation of an influential community of concern regarding the future of Washington Heights and Inwood. A continuing dialogue in Spanish and/or English is encouraged using the following web based communication resource: [www.cd12-plan.net](http://www.cd12-plan.net)

The list of participants in the acknowledgements section are individuals agreed to be the “readers” and “questioners” of our preliminary research on the issues, draft, and final reports. This group provides continuity to the work of accomplishing goals. It provides for an overall management structure to assure a fair means for inclusion of diverse interests, needs, and concerns during our analysis. Recommendations are combinations of proposals for action identified by the participants. They describe the future of Washington Heights and Inwood from a variety of perspectives. Vision is as unique to the individual as it is to an entire community; following is a record of its development to date.

### 1.1.3 The Role of the Community Board

Community Boards are representative bodies empowered by Chapter 8 of the New York City Charter. Members are residents, business owners and others with a significant interest in the district. The Borough President appoints half of the members. City council members appoint the rest by referral based on their share of the board’s population in their district. In addition to the appointed members, CD12 benefits from the participation of a significant range of local, citywide and regional nonprofit community development corporations and civic groups. ALSO AT-LARGE MEMBERS, REPRESENTING MAJOR INSTITUTIONS--NYPH, ISABELLA GERIATRIC.

The Community Board has a staff of five, a volunteer board membership of fifty. Volunteer participation in committees is extensive when the occasion and need arises. The community board produces a substantial volume of knowledge capital with a budget that is typically less than \$200,000.

### **Advisory Powers & Capacity to Build a Strong Public Process**

Since 1975 and despite the lack of staff resources to support planning, community boards remain a significant part of New York City's democratic process using three legislative resources

### **New York City Charter Chapter 8: City Planning—Section 197a: Power to set goals and objectives**

Chapter 8 of the New York City Charter provides for community-based planning are provisions of Section 197a, 197b and 197c. These sections demand an extensive public process ranging from the "up from the grassroots" knowledge capital to formal land use review procedures and zoning change applications. This section also supports the integration and cooperation of city agencies by requiring reports and the involvement of the community board through other sections of the NYC Charter.

### **Chapter 10: Budget Process—Section 230 power for project scoping and expediting:**

Chapter 10 of the NYC Charter requires the mayor to assure the availability of representatives of each agency that delivers local service. Agency representation is outlined in Section 230 of this chapter, Community Board Budget Priorities. The District Cabinet represents many agencies, but not all of them.

### **Chapter 60: CD Services Co-terminality—Section 2707 is a service-planning power**

Chapter 60 (Section 2707) is very useful in that it calls for Agency Budgets and Service Statements by COMMUNITY District and it supports Sec. 230 in Chapter 10 by requiring public access to major agency plans and policies, including but not limited to the goal of co-terminality.

Each agency with service districts within Community District 12 or the Manhattan overall are required to provide an annual statement of its service objectives, priorities, programs, and projected activities to the CD12 board for the new fiscal year, if requested by community board or borough board. The role of the Community Board in Chapter 8; Section 197b requires notification of plans and proposals from public agencies, public benefit corporations such as the Economic Development Corporation and the Port Authority and recognizes the need for transparency in agency communications with the community. The role of the Community Board in Chapter 8; Section 197c, is defined by the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP). The Community Board is the first stop for review on a broad range changes in zoning and a host of related land use issues. Overall, the New York City Charter is a powerful tool for members to shape the development, growth, and improvement of community districts.

The capacity of community boards to build a strong public process on the other hand is a central issue that requires analysis. A report released by then Assemblyman Scott M. Stringer and currently Borough President of Manhattan in June 2005 found a disparity worthy of further inquiry. The allocation of funds to the boards varies considerably. The example given is Community Board 8 on the Upper East Side serves the largest population and has the largest budget in Manhattan. It is a modest amount just \$284,000. But in Washington Heights in

Community District 12, which has the second largest population received the least amount of money at \$180,500. Effectively addressing the communication and public service needs of a planning district requires a fair baseline formula that aids the members of the board to build an effective case for meeting community needs.

#### 1.1.4 Methodology

The preface to this document suggests that its readers and contributors maintain a sensitivity to three components of planning. The idea of establishing a position within a “comprehensive plan” that includes the plans of others, and once done to consider the roles available to them in the “participatory” and “strategic” activity in order to produce desired incomes. The central purpose of planning is to identify actions that will assure positive futures by preventing damage to future generations. The chart, “Catalyst” below outlines the CCAC/CB process.

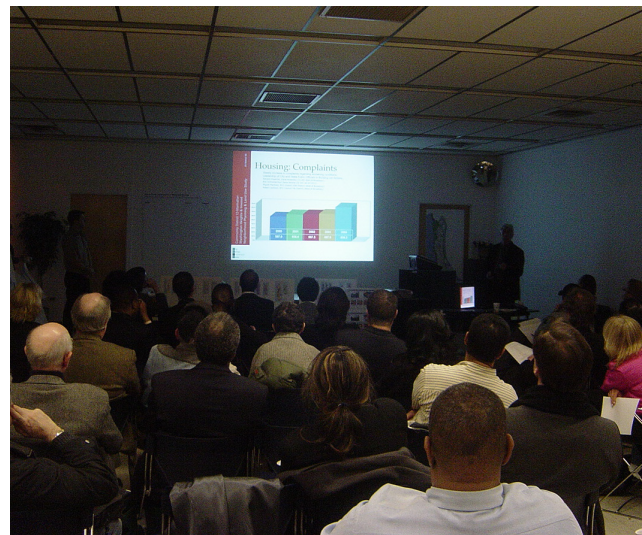
The technical methods deployed by the City College Architecture Center for the conduct of a district-wide CCAC analysis are composed of three major parts.

**First**, a land use and building exterior condition survey sampled 20% of the district's 300 blocks. CCAC expanded this with financial support from the Enterprise Foundation and the leadership of the Community League of the Heights (CLOTH) in 2005. The land use and building condition surveys completed in March 2006 are structured to permit periodic updating.

**Second**, CCAC drew on the use of the U.S. Census for Demographic and Related Area Research resources to define trends and issues. Demography describes people, household income, housing conditions and costs, and business activity in defined geographic areas from the state and regional level to Census Tracts of six to eight blocks. There are over 3,000 variables in the U.S. Census, providing invaluable information for comparing areas and for developing a sense of the social and economic needs of a community.

**Third**, CCAC and the CD12 Working Group learned a great deal through community meetings, workshops and interviews. The purpose of these sessions was to assure wide representation of the needs, interests, and concerns of community leaders and residents.

These methods helped to define the experience of living and working in CD12 within a planning context. The structure defines issues, but equally important it is a record of a public process used to encourage and support the development activities in the community.



#### 1.1.5 Review of the Public Process

The Study examined all of Community District 12 to assist Community Board 12. In brief, the issues are historic preservation and building condition, zoning and land use, community facility needs, housing affordability (the single most critical issue in the District), together with the need for innovations in educational, cultural, and recreational services development.



The following pages provide a review of the outreach efforts facilitated by the CD12 Working Group and CCAC, and a summary of activities and presentations in four-month cycles beginning September 2005 and concluding in September 2006.

### **September through December 2005**

Following initial conversations regarding the goals of the study in September 2005, a review of previous studies was begun. CCAC carried out a field study of land uses, building conditions and retail properties. In addition, a public opinion survey of residents and community leaders was initiated. The survey requested statements regarding major issues, the locations where these issues were physically evident, and elicited information on community leaders and residents with personal knowledge and experience of these issues.

In December, a series of “briefing reports” to the standing committees of the community board sought input and informed the membership of the goals and objectives of the study.

### **January through April 2006**

On January 11, 2006, a presentation on was made about the process of gathering primary data (field and opinion surveys), and secondary information (from sources such as the U.S. Census). A preliminary review of findings identified issues for more detailed analysis. A Draft Briefing Report outlined major community development issues.



On March 22, 2006, a CCAC presentation brought together the initial information gathering and preliminary analysis functions of the study. This second presentation further defined the social characteristics and demographics of CD12. This work complemented a detailed review of land use and zoning, including the identification of three case study sites. Each case study depicted possible development of residential structures using current and alternative zoning envelopes.

On April 29, 2006, a daylong “issue and vision statement” workshop attended by residents, political representatives, and community leaders engaged the plan and initiated vision statements. To create balance between the needs of residents and major development interests, the workshop called for the formation of an ongoing constituency for planning.

The residents discussed six topics including (1) Preservation of Affordable Housing, (2) CD12 East and West ( Straight Talk: *Dimelo Directo*), (3) Community Parks, and Waterfront Access, (4) District Character and Historic Resources, (5) Community Economic Development and (6) an Open forum, to identify other issues and concerns. Preliminary recommendations for action were developed in a 90 minute discussion. (Resident’s Workshop Recommendations)

## May through August 2006

The project's closure began to take shape in May 2006 with the dissemination of executive summaries, and draft and/or final reports prepared for the Working Group, community leaders, political representatives, and workshop participants.

The New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) and the Department of City Planning (DCP) jointly presented their final recommendations for Sherman Creek on the evening of June 28<sup>th</sup> at P.S./I.S. 176 on Broadway between Academy and 204th Street. Briefly these recommendations were:

1. An extensive contextual zone for all of Inwood that could eventually extend to much of Community District 12 and;
2. The preparation of a new Sherman Creek zoning district map.

Anticipating this proposal, CCAC developed a plan with the Working Group for its participation in two additional community workshops following the HPD/DCP statement of zoning and community development policy.

A presentation was made to the Executive Committee covering a final review of the document's main elements including broad list of recom-

mendations for possible development of formal board resolutions.

Additional workshops were planned with the Audubon Partnership for Economic Development (APED) to aid in (1) demystifying the "development resources" available through the inclusionary zone option offered in proposed zoning map change to the community and, equally important, (2) examining the architectural impact given a range of options selected by theoretical developers. The first of these presentations was held on August 17, 2006 and included CCAC's presentation of a scale model (1" = 150').

## September through December 2006

The project was brought to a close with two meetings that established a record of the year's work which prioritized the recommendations.

These priorities for the implementation of recommendations made by the study outline the steps needed to build public support for the plan and access the needed resources.

A "next steps" presentation was given to present the document as a record of the work and a refinement of the community board's priorities with regard to land use and zoning. This session also formally announced the availability of the entire document to the public through the community board and a special website was established to continue the community-based planning process.



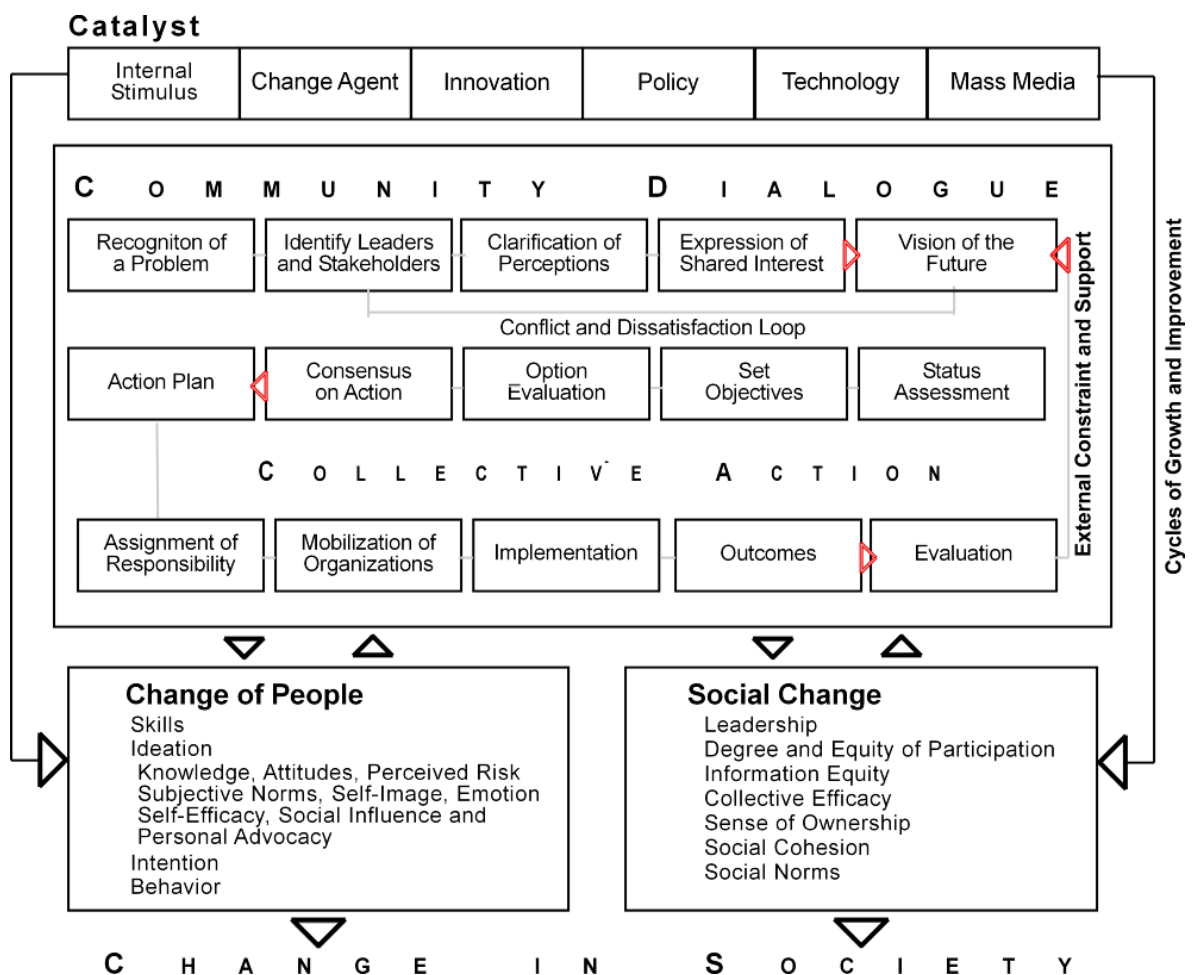
## Public Process Innovations Lead to Coalition Building

Building participation opportunities for residents to engage in community planning and design is a product of outreach through direct mail, the Internet, routine public sessions and follow-up task and research group meetings.

This report contributes to this process with a compilation of an extensive database of residents and community leaders interested in planning for Washington Heights and Inwood. During the course of the study, CCAC ascertained specific contact people at each organization, updated mailing and email addresses, and phone numbers. CCAC called personally to over sixty contacts to establish relationships, clarify information, obtain additional data, and discern the most appropriate contact person or people. It is recommended that CB12 keep this list up to date and available on the website.

Effective community development goal setting requires high value information resources in areas of greatest interests. Increased effectiveness occurs when personal interests combine with institutional missions. To participate further go to [www.cd12-plan.net](http://www.cd12-plan.net) – a web based communication resource created to evaluate ongoing development activities through a continuing dialogue in Spanish and/or English.

There is increasing alarm regarding the cost and deterioration of shelter. This was reported in May 2000 by Nos Quedamos for New York's city and state political delegations, and the organizations listed here are joining in the effort. In April 2000, CCAC prepared testimony for the New York State Assembly Hearings on Housing in Northern Manhattan.



In brief, the report and testimony found that Washington Heights and Inwood have just fifteen employed staff members available to help resolve the housing issues of residents. Of these, eight are attorneys with NMIC. Of the remaining seven, four are tenant organizers, and three are HPD code inspectors/"tenant guiders" including the three other nonprofits. Despite the heroic work of relatively large social service providers in CD12, the need for a large "housing preservation" entity was growing and the immediate future will be a pivotal period for housing preservation and development initiatives.

Overall, the fragile affordability of housing in CD12 emerges as the central message from the public process. The tenants of Washington Heights and Inwood do not have the depth of services needed to meet their changing housing needs or to protect them from the abuse of deteriorating housing conditions. The reasons are many and debatable; the increased level of human suffering is undeniable.

### 1.1.6 The Community-Base

#### Nonprofit Housing Providers and Managers

To obtain a sense of the state of affairs in the community, CCAC interviewed housing advocates in the community<sup>2</sup> to develop a record of conditions as reported by tenants. In addition, HPD and the following organizations provided housing maintenance records based on the class of violations as reported by the independent or cooperating action of HPD inspectors.

There are three classes of violations. Class A violations are non-hazardous and must be corrected within 90 days and certified within two weeks. Class B violations are deemed hazardous and must be corrected within 30 days and certified as repaired within two weeks. Class C violations are immediately hazardous and must be corrected within 24 hours and certified as complete within 24 hours.

1. Community League of the Heights (CLOTH)
2. Community Association of Progressive Dominicans (CAPD)
3. Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation (NMIC)
4. Audubon Partnership for Economic Development (APED)
5. Washington Heights Inwood Coalition (WHIC)

#### Housing

The Northern Manhattan Improvement Cooperation (NMIC) (<http://www.nmic.org>) is the only nonprofit funded to provide free legal advice and organize buildings in Washington Heights. It has just eight attorneys and four organizers working on housing related issues. Four other nonprofit organizations, Community League of the Heights (CLOTH), Community Association of Progressive Dominicans (ACDP), Audubon Partnership for Economic Development (APED), and the Washington Heights Inwood Coalition (WHIC) each have one staff member "guiding" tenant organizing, conducting building inspections and providing workshops.<sup>3</sup>

NMIC, Harlem Legal Services, and Community Law offices are the only organizations providing free legal services to the community. However, resources at these organizations are inadequate for example, NMIC is only staffed with 8 attorneys, 10 paralegals and 4 organizers

working on housing related issues.

Community League of the Heights (CLOTH) (<http://www.cloth159.org/>) is a community-based nonprofit owner and manager of housing for low- and moderate-income families. The staff experience with housing management is an important source of information about the needs of residents. Its roots are deep in the community. For over 50 years, CLOTH) has focused on the needs of residents in the southern Washington Heights area with a mission encompassing advocacy, organizing, and provision of services related to decent, affordable housing, education, health, youth services and neighborhood improvement. Special services include a shelter for the homeless, senior citizen services, and pregnancy prevention counseling.



### **Economic Development**

The Audubon Partnership for Economic Development (APED), (<http://www.audubonpartnership.org>)

Established in 1996, APED has developed resources to stimulate employment and career development largely in response to the formation of the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone (UMEZ). It works closely with the Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation and recently formed the New Heights Neighborhood Center, a program providing job placement and career development.

It supports educational services, technical assistance services, and an economic development program in CD12 through strengthening small businesses, management, and marketing capacity. Economic development initiatives include the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone Commercial Revitalization Initiative, a revolving loan fund, and business outreach and technical assistance.



**The Empowerment Zone.** In addition, there are several districts that produce resources from property tax revenues returned to address specific needs such as business improvement districts, Empire State districts and federal districts designed to produce benefits for targeted income groups and/or businesses.

Map 1.1.9b shows the UMEZ zone with a schematic representation of other priority areas of business development and service interests established by community-based organizations and the Economic Development Corporation.

These resources are primarily directed toward the South Washington Heights and the Inwood Shopping districts to encourage business improvement districts (BID)



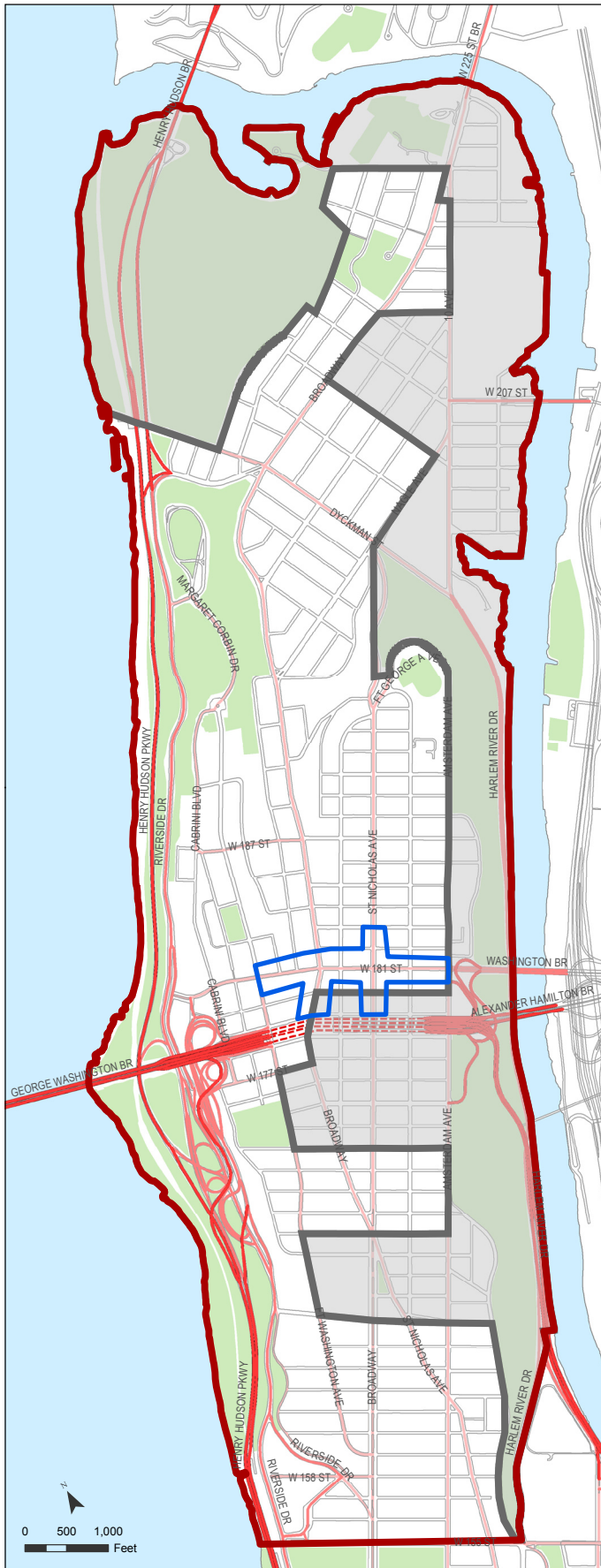
### **Social Capital Investments**

Although a number of groups were not interviewed, conducted their websites resources were reviewed:

Alianza Dominicana, Inc. (<http://www.alianzadom.org/>) is a nonprofit community development corporation. Its mission is to assist children, youth and families break the cycle of poverty and fulfill their potential as members of the global community. Since 1987, it has developed a budget of about \$10 million in combined operations in 11 locations serving about 17,000 people annually.

Community Association of Progressive Dominicans (ACDP) (<http://www.acdp.org>), This organization also fills a vital role in the social welfare of families in the community. Its mission is to

# COMMUNITY DISTRICT 12-M ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ZONES



- ECONOMIC ZONES**
- Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone
- SMALL BUSINESS SERVICE AREAS**
- Washington Heights Bid
  - Washington Heights-Inwood Development Corp.

Source: NYCmap, Community Cartography, Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone

promote and develop the physical, emotional, social and economic well-being of the residents of Upper Manhattan, the Bronx, and New York City by facilitating community empowerment through education, provision of human services, and the development of individual skills and community leadership.

Washington Heights-Inwood Coalition (WHIC) (no website available) provides housing programs on tenant rights and helps to organize tenant associations including conflict resolution and community mediation services.

### 1.1.7 Vision Statement

A vision for the future begins by listening. The outreach work undertaken to identify contributors to a vision for the future began with a copy of Community Board 12's 2003-2004 Resource Directory. The broad categories were block associations, community services, elected officials, government (organizations), historians, press, police precincts, and religious institutions. CCAC added the categories of Community Board 12M contacts, community based organizations (CBO's), institutions, guests, funders, and residents.

Over a period of four weeks (September and October), the listings increased by 250%. Overall, the database grew from about forty-five entries to over 180 specific entries that included names, addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses. The following is a summary statements made in workshops in which people were asked help produce a description of this vision:

*Twenty years or so from now Washington Heights and Inwood will be pretty much the same as they are, just better. Audubon Terrace will have an active tenant organization that serves the community. We will have improved our natural environment greatly. We may even see the "opening of the underground creeks", and it will certainly be a much more pedestrian friendly environment. The subways will be clean, attractive, fully utilized.*

*In making community improvements, CD12 will become the "outdoor recreation destination" of New York. Some may even call it "Upstate Manhattan". We will be a drug free community with no dealers and no users. The beauty of the community will be enhanced and improved everywhere.*

*Complete access to our riversides will form a green necklace around our community. Our waterfront areas will also support thousands of new employment opportunities. There will be community-supported agriculture, many green markets, and a reputation for great restaurants in all of our neighborhoods. We will have cultural centers that are the envy of New York City, rivaling downtown.*

*We will have people who were well prepared as children 20 years ago. We will have residents that fully understand diversity and not just pay "lip service" to it. It will be a community where people, not just money will be in the "driver's seat."*

*All of our residents will be voters and civically engaged. The education for our kids will be what it should be. We will be a multi-lingual, multi-cultural community. One resident used the well-known closing line from Garrison Keeler's radio show, *The Prairie Home Companion* -- "all of our children will be above average." The rich history of this community will continue by sustaining its diversity.*

## **1.2 Initial Findings**

### **1.2.1 Overview**

The Neighborhood Planning and Land Use Study is the first district-wide planning and land use analysis of CD12 under the auspices of the community board, but it is not the only planning effort conducted in the district.

Overall, all the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone (UMEZ) and the New York City's Economic Development Corporation have been primary sources of funding for research into development issues of CD12. The Enterprise Foundation has provided some planning grant assistance to community-based groups. The involvement of the Local Initiative Support Corporation has focused primarily on community facility development and social services such as child day-care in CD12. Map 1.2.9a provides a snapshot of the physical boundaries of recent studies used to define problems and prepare plans. Note the heavy concentration of "study areas" surrounding Sherman Creek and portions of Inwood.

#### **Conclusions Drawn from Review**

Each of the major studies reviewed to date focuses in part on the quality of life of residents and the general outlook of businesses, institutional leaders, and community-based organizations. Specific physical proposals have primarily targeted commercial and manufacturing land areas and include issues associated with development in CD12, most notably, (1) Inwood/Sherman Creek, (2) the New York Presbyterian Hospital Campus, and (3), the I-95/181<sup>st</sup> Street and St Nicholas commercial corridors.

The studies covering the Sherman Creek area reflect resident based planning efforts and the long standing public interest in reclaiming New York City's waterfront for the public realm. As a result, the Sherman Creek waterfront became the subject of an interagency planning effort in 2003, led by the Economic Development Corporation (EDC). The studies cover almost all of Inwood. This is also referred to as the Re-Zoning of Inwood and Sherman Creek.

The effort by the Department of City Planning (DCP) and EDC offers a precedent-setting framework for evaluating the use of zoning tools for the entire district. The question about the appropriate combination of preservation and development choices remains open. In effect, Sherman Creek and Inwood will "show the way" and expose both positive and the negative impacts of changes in real estate investment opportunity created through "windfall" zoning changes in the district.

It should be noted that these studies did not address housing market issues. Detailed neighborhood housing studies can produce significant information. This information could yield substantial affordable housing development benefits. The upcoming development of the CEQR review of the rental housing market for the Sherman Creek zoning change will provide a significant beginning point for measuring the differences in housing affordability in this area. The fact that the Rent Guidelines Board regulates over 95% of the community's rented stock should not deter advocates from working to define the special nature of the housing crisis in Washington Heights and Inwood.



## 1.2.2 Synopsis and Findings of Previous Studies

A number of studies have been carried out over the past decade, and are listed in reverse chronological order:

**Heights Planning Initiative** (January 2005) was contracted by Community League of the Heights (CLOTH) A Public Opinion Report was prepared by Warnke Community Consulting and a series of maps reflecting a physical survey was produced by the Enterprise Foundation. Completed in January 2005, The Heights Planning Initiative Report reported on the outlook of residents and leaders through an opinion survey and an assessment of existing physical conditions. The study identified and recommended priority action leading to the rehabilitation of several small buildings in the community. The CB12 Neighborhood Planning and Land Use Study by the City College Architecture Center updated this assessment, finding very few remaining privately owned vacant buildings and no city-owned buildings. This study covered the area from river to river and from 155th Street to 170th Street. CCAC served as a "data/GIS warehouse" and training center for this study .

**Audubon Avenue Neighborhood Planning Study** (February 2005). This study was carried out by CB12-Manhattan in cooperation with the NYC Department of City Planning, Harlem Community Development Corporation and Insight Associates. The study area was Audubon Avenue, from West 168th Street to West 184th Street. This initiative sought to define the existing and potential loss of housing through the illegal conversion of ground-floor units to retail uses. Interviews of residents and business owners established basis for ongoing community workshops and public comment. Recommendations were to:

- (1) conduct informal focus group meetings on Audubon focused on outreach regarding zoning and land use,
- (2) to contact business people to create forum to discuss needs, leases, rents
- (3) examine market demand systematically.
- (4) Present zoning alternatives in a workshop forum (using ranking methods).
- (5) Consider zoning alternative factors: relation of Audubon to Amsterdam, new zoning overlay areas and appropriate locations.

The four alternatives that were recommended were:

- (1) Re-zone all of Audubon & Amsterdam between 168<sup>th</sup> and 181<sup>st</sup> with a commercial overlay;
- (2) Re-zone clusters of retail uses from 170<sup>th</sup> to 176<sup>th</sup> Westside of Audubon and 170<sup>th</sup> to 180<sup>th</sup> Westside of Amsterdam;
- (3) Rezone just the "corners" for commercial uses and
- (4) leave it all alone.

It is also implied but not clearly stated in the study that recommendation #3 would provide for the grandfathering of long term, non-conforming uses, and, following the acceptance of this solution, the community would be offered a quality of commercial services option with excellent potential for a high quality urban design solution.

**Uptown Broadway BID** Business Improvement District Feasibility Study (April 2005). The Community League of the Heights convened the study. Warnke Community Consulting prepared the report. The Enterprise Foundation, Harlem Community Development Corporation,

and Office of City Council Member Miguel Martinez funded the study. The project focused on Broadway from 135<sup>th</sup> to 175<sup>th</sup> Street. The implementation of this work builds, in part, on the Heights Planning Initiative completed in January 2005.

The report calls for the formation of a BID in three Broadway areas. The overall area focuses on Broadway from 135<sup>th</sup> to 171<sup>st</sup> Street with a primary interest in 135<sup>th</sup> to 145<sup>th</sup>; 157<sup>th</sup> to 164<sup>th</sup> and 164<sup>th</sup> to 171<sup>st</sup>. It recommends continued merchant outreach and discussions with NYC Department of Small Business Services to produce distinctive commercial centers.

**Reconstruction of Tenth Avenue** HWM738 (Spring 2005) A presentation by the Office of Community Outreach and Notification estimated completion of the project in April of 2006. The project involves reconstruction from 206<sup>th</sup> to 218<sup>th</sup> and the expenditure of \$9M for improvements to the intersections, water and roadway systems, including new mains, sewers, street lighting, and traffic signals as required. The lack of coordination became apparent to the community when at the start of the reconstruction project,. Con Edison informed CB12 of its plans to use Broadway (the only way in or out of Inwood) for conduit construction to a new Sherman Creek sub-station.

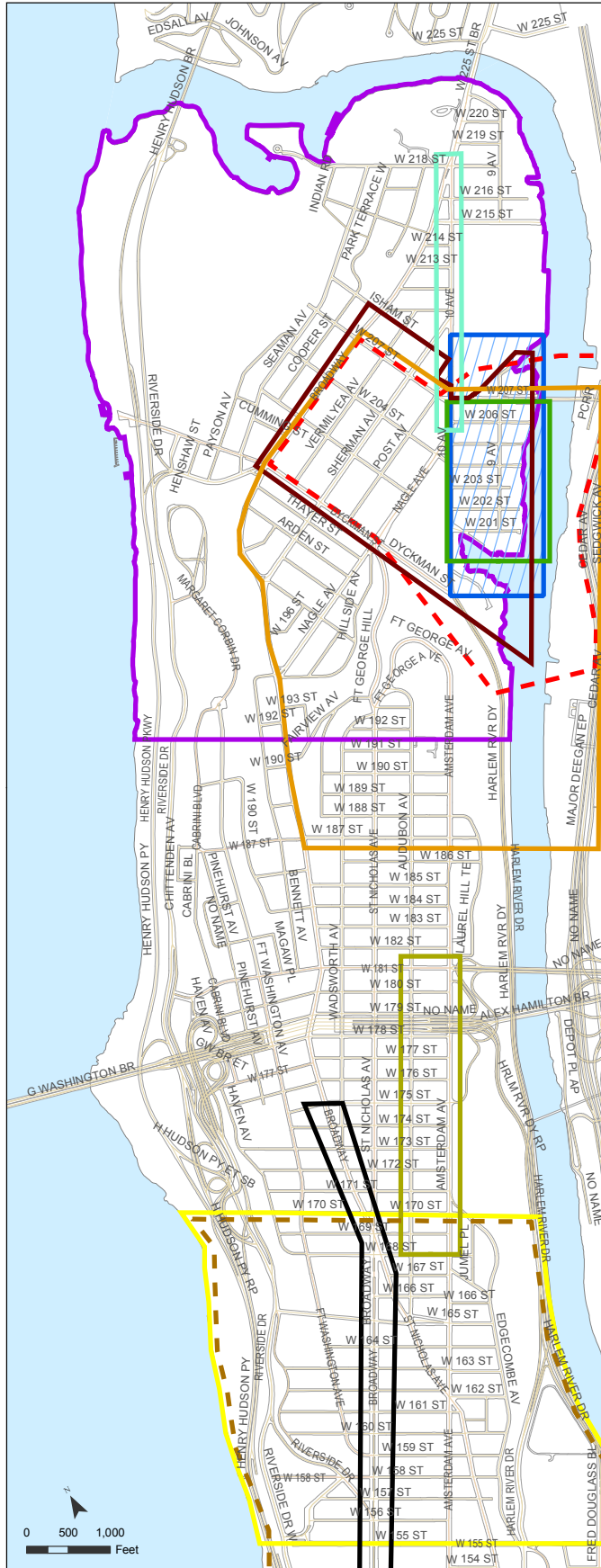
**Sherman Creek: Visions/Visiones** (May 2005) Produced by City College Architecture Center (CCAC) for the Audubon Partnership for Economic Development's Northern Manhattan Community Revitalization Plan (NoMA). The study outlined the major urban design challenges associated with two objectives outlined by the Department of City Planning and the Economic Development Corporation. These are expanded access to the waterfront and the conversion of existing manufacturing districts to residential. Following a review of existing conditions, the study expressed the community's vision of a low-rise residential community at the water's edge with added bulk along 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue. To further aid in illustrating development options CCAC produced a large-scale model (1' = 150') of all of Inwood in June 2006. The blocks north of Sherman Creek Cove between Tenth Avenue, the Harlem River and 207<sup>th</sup> Street and the University Heights Bridge define the major area of study.

**Sherman Creek Business Plan** (October 2005) Prepared by LandAir Project Resources Inc. and G. L. Blackstone & Associates, LLC as sub consultants for the study. This study partially updates the Inwood/Washington Heights Commercial Retail Initiative (July 1999) prepared for Audubon Partnership for Economic Development (APED) by Urban Technical Assistance Project (UTAP). The study area is roughly bounded by West 207<sup>th</sup> Street (N), portions of Highbridge Park down to approximately 187<sup>th</sup> Street and along the Harlem River Drive (S), Broadway (W) and I-97 / the Major Deegan Expressway (E). The plan found that the "concentration of Latin culture constitutes a distinctive and underutilized asset that is waiting for the right mix of action steps to unleash the potential of the area retail economy". Objectives of the study were to determine market share of this area and to define a measure for estimating the potential for an increase in commercial space. A weakness of the study arbitrary definition of the trade area by centering it on Dyckman Street and Sherman Avenue. It estimated the total consumer expenditure for retail goods was \$288M.












**Planning Workshop Synopsis Booklet** On January 31, 2004, the Sherman Creek community-based planning workshop identified planning issues and concerns of community participants on a variety of topics. When compared with the current proposal made on June 28, 2006 several distinct differences are apparent.

Chief among these is the transition from spoken English terms used in the first study to the technical language of zoning in the second.. While some of this is necessary, the transition from the multi-agency approach developed in 2004 to the current phase that requires deciphering

# COMMUNITY DISTRICT 12-M NEIGHBORHOOD STUDIES



**STUDY NAME**

-  Sherman Creek: Planning Workshop Synopsis
-  DCP Sherman Creek Study
-  Uptown Broadway Bid
-  Heights Planning Initiative
-  Reconstruction of Tenth Avenue HWM738
-  Sherman Creek Business Plan
-  Sherman Creek Urban Design Plan
-  Sherman Creek Visions/Visiones
-  Audubon Avenue Neighborhood Planning Study
-  South Washington Heights Commercial Retail Initiative
-  Inwood/ Washington Heights Commercial Retail Initiative

Source: NYCmap, Community Cartography, City College Architecture Center  
Map 1.2.9a Neighborhood Studies

zoning text is daunting to residents. For background, please see: ([www.shermancreek.com](http://www.shermancreek.com)) This site may close and updates on the City Planning website under Projects can be monitored.<sup>4</sup>

**Sherman Creek: An Urban Design Plan for a New Waterfront Neighborhood** (January 2003). This was prepared by Warren Antonio James, architect for the Audubon Partnership for Economic Development (LDC). The study boundaries were West 207th Street and the University Heights Bridge (N) the Sherman Creek Inlet (S) the Harlem River (E) and 10th Avenue (W). The study briefly reviews site conditions at the time, documenting the absence of access to the waterfront at the street ends and the limited access south of 201st Street at Sherman Creek. In the affected area, the city owned 12% of the property, Con Edison owned 20%, and 68% was in private hands. The goal of project was to develop public access to the water's edge, and to review development potential for housing and community facilities and commercial office development. The study recommended the extension of the existing R7-2 zone for the entire area and facilities for sports (NYC Olympic Bid), culture (Latino Hall of Fame,) education, (NY Aquarium branch), and outdoor concert and performing arts facilities were suggested. Of the sites identified for development, a commercial office center was suggested (designed by Roberta Washington). Finally, the study summarizes a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) by Roy F. Weston, Inc. This work documents the potential for past contamination based on use. Five potentially hazardous conditions were identified.

**Northern Manhattan Heritage Plan** (April 2003) by City College Architecture Center documented the architectural and physical development history of Northern Manhattan. The project's area of analysis extended from 122<sup>nd</sup> Street (Morningside Heights) to 155<sup>th</sup> Street largely west of Frederick Douglas Blvd and from river to river north of 155<sup>th</sup> Street to the tip of Manhattan. The plan documents the architectural and physical development history of Northern Manhattan and calls for a series of initiatives designed to support the broad recognition of Northern Manhattan. The New York State Legislature designated the area as a New York State Heritage Area in 2004. The implementation of the required management plan similar to that of the NYC Harbor Park management plan created by the Battery Park City Authority remains to be undertaken.

**Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center: Campus Planning and Development Study** (June 2002) In 1930, NYPMC was a large facility at just over two-million square feet. With the completion of the current build out plan to 2010, the total square footage will be over seven million square feet. At this rate of growth, the facility could reach twelve million square feet by 2030 according to this study. In a facility of this size and complexity, the relationship to the residential community is based on the identification of mutual interests and the provision of technical and professional services unique to the social assistance mission of a health services institution. To this end, the medical center enjoys a positive relationship to community organizations. The relationship of the medical center campus to the urban landscape on the other hand has been criticized for largely ignoring the subject. In fact, the section of the plan entitled, "The Campus and the Neighborhood" had no discussion of the community other than a "mode of arrival" analysis of routes used through it to various destinations within the complex.

**Southern Washington Heights Commercial Retail Initiative, Project Site Assessment** (April 1999) Prepared for the Audubon Partnership for Economic Development (APED) and The Community League of West 159<sup>th</sup> Street, Inc., by the Urban Technical Assistance Project (UTAP) from Columbia University.. The project area is bounded by 155<sup>th</sup> Street (S) 170<sup>th</sup> Street (N) from river to river.

This study examined physical conditions in this area. Sanitation services were deemed unsatisfactory. The streets were found in need of reconstruction or caps. The sidewalks had substantial areas in need of repair. Buildings in substantial numbers were considered to be in fair or poor condition. The storefronts needed façade improvements, graffiti removal, and basic cleaning. The sidewalk display by businesses was a positive but with only 6 locations, recent growth suggested need for added vendor controls. The median strips (15) received favorable ratings except for sanitation service on 10 of them. Street trees were counted with 145 trees total and 32 missing. There were 195 trees in median strips with the majority in good condition.

**Inwood/Washington Heights Commercial Retail Initiative**, (July 1999) Prepared for Audubon Partnership for Economic Development (APED) by the Urban Technical Assistance Project (UTAP) from Columbia University. The project area is bounded by to the north and east by the Harlem River, Inwood Hill and Fort Tryon Parks to the west and by 192<sup>nd</sup> Street to the south.

The study warned of the growing gap between the skills of the resident workforce and the rapidly changing regional economy toward high-skill technical jobs. Of the total businesses located on Broadway (100) 52% were retail trade, 35% were services and 13% represented vacant locations, of the businesses located on Dyckman (153) 67% were retail trade, 26% were services and 3% were vacant (5 locations) or TECEG&S or FIRE. In the third shopping area on 207<sup>th</sup> Street (116 businesses) 68% were retail trade, 26% were services and 6% were vacant (7 locations). Sanitation services were deemed satisfactory. The streets were rated in good condition overall.

The sidewalks were in need of repair (about 10% of those on Dyckman, Broadway and 207<sup>th</sup> Street) Just ten buildings were deemed in poor condition. One third of the storefronts needed façade improvements, graffiti removal, and basic cleaning. The sidewalk displays of businesses were given a positive rating, with only 31 locations where vendor control was recommended. There were 65 street trees, none were missing; many were recently planted and immature, with only one in poor condition.

(Endnotes)

1 Few people realize that one of the great urban planning thinkers of our time, Paul Davidoff just prior to his death in 1984 founded an organization entitled Suburban Action Institute (Metropolitan Action Institute). He believed breaking down the barriers to social diversity, affordable housing, and employment promulgated by suburban zoning regulations in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. These regulations contributed, he believed to the concentration of inner city poverty. A look at poverty, in the region today and older urban centers throughout the region are already beginning to show these same concentrations. It is with some wonder that we find an identical position taken by the conservative economist, Edward Glaeser three decades later.

2 Interviews were held with, Yvonne Stennet, Director Megan S. Housing Services Manager and Keith Knot Project Development Coordinator of Community League of the Heights CLOTH. Carmen Diaz, Vice-president of the Audubon Partnership shared the viewpoint of APED for CD12 in an extensive discussion. CCAC also developed a detailed scale model of Inwood for APED in mid-2006.

3 Information is from: *Solutions for Washington Heights-Inwood: Protecting Tenant Rights in Washington Heights-Inwood* Prepared for May 2006 Nos Quedamos/ Project Remain by Rex Curry (Director of Planning for City College Architecture Center), Ramona Hernandez, Ph.D., Carlos Vargas, Ph.D., Kenneth Rosenfeld, Esq., and Fred Rooney Principal Investigator: Wendy Garcia, MS

4 The direct web address is: [www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/sherman\\_creek/index.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/sherman_creek/index.shtml)

