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**CITY PLANNING BEGINS PUBLIC REVIEW FOR REZONING OF HARLEM'S RENOWNED 125TH STREET TO STRENGTHEN ITS CULTURAL PRESENCE AND CATALYZE 125TH STREET AS A MAJOR REGIONAL BUSINESS DISTRICT**

October 1, 2007 - City Planning Director Amanda M. Burden today announced the beginning of public review for a [comprehensive rezoning of the 125th Street Corridor](#) in Harlem to encourage the development of a regional business corridor by stimulating new investment as well as new arts, entertainment and retail activities. Regulations unique to 125th Street would include special requirements for arts and entertainment uses, height controls, limits on bank frontages as well as protections for neighboring brownstone blocks. The plan is the first comprehensive review of 125th Street's rezoning in over 40 years and is the product of an extensive and ongoing collaboration between the greater Harlem community and City agencies. It has been designed to spur a mix of new retail, office, hotel and residential development within the framework of urban design guidelines that recognize the special character of this internationally celebrated street. The 125th Street plan is an example of the Bloomberg Administration's economic development strategy to fuel regional business districts throughout the five boroughs, while furthering the goal of a sustainable city by directing growth to transit-rich corridors.

The proposed plan focuses on the 125th Street corridor, an area bounded by 124th and 126th Streets, and Second Avenue to the east and Broadway to the west, through which 125th Street serves as the spine. The rezoning is projected to spur development of approximately 1.8 million square feet of commercial space including office, retail and hotel use in locations where current zoning does not permit sufficient density to encourage reinvestment. This balanced rezoning initiative would not only encourage development of an estimated 2,500 new residential units in the corridor, of which more than 500 units would be income-targeted affordable housing, but it would also protect the scale of the historic brownstone areas north and south of 125th Street near Fifth Avenue.

"Our rezoning plan for 125th Street will spur new investment as well as a range of cultural and retail opportunities. This comprehensive initiative will fulfill the promise of Harlem's Main Street as a vibrant corridor and a premier arts, entertainment and commercial destination in the City," said Ms. Burden. She added, "We look forward to continuing the public dialogue through the ULURP process to ensure that 125th Street becomes a great pedestrian boulevard both day and night that epitomizes the spirit of Harlem."

"Harlem and the entire City will benefit from a balanced rezoning plan that capitalizes on the opportunities of 125th Street as a transportation hub to create new businesses, cultural and entertainment attractions, and thousands of jobs," said NYCEDC President Robert C. Lieber.

"The plan also embraces and builds upon the unique character of Harlem as a visitors' destination, another important business catalyst that will benefit both the local community and the City as well."

Sustained public engagement and consensus building have played a vital role in determining the objectives for the 125th Street initiative. The Department of City Planning and New York City Economic Development Corporation have led a comprehensive multi-agency three year planning effort that has been informed by a community-based Advisory Committee comprising more than 100 Harlem business and local civic representatives, community board members and elected officials. Since the public unveiling of the rezoning plan in May 2006, the Department has held more than 150 meetings with stakeholders, property owners, residents and elected officials to discuss and refine the plan. Area stakeholders continue to play a pivotal role in this process and the City's seven-month land use review process offers additional opportunities for public participation.

The zoning in the area has generally remained unchanged since 1961. In spite of being well served by subways, buses and Metro-North, much of 125th Street is lined with single story retail or buildings with vacant upper floors. With the right zoning, 125th Street has the potential to be invigorated with new investment, capitalizing on its rich transportation network and building on the character of its storied arts venues.

The Department's comprehensive strategy is balanced, encouraging growth where most appropriate while promoting preservation within select areas of the corridor. It would permit the greatest density in a business core area between Frederick Douglass Boulevard and Malcolm X Boulevard and adjacent to the Park Avenue Metro North station. This transit-oriented plan is consistent with the City's PlaNYC goals for a sustainable city.

Special District rules applicable from Broadway to Second Avenue would also shape the form of new buildings and how they meet the street. Key elements include:

- Maintaining a consistent street wall to frame 125th Street,
- Ensuring ground floor retail continuity and transparency to improve the pedestrian experience along 125th Street, and
- Establishing height limits for new developments within the corridor.
- Permitting marquee signs for visual or performing arts uses to reinforce the street's identity as an arts and culture destination.

With prominent arts institutions including the Apollo Theater and the Studio Museum already thriving on 125th Street, the plan would encourage new arts and entertainment venues along 125th Street. Between Frederick Douglass Boulevard and Malcolm X Boulevard, new developments of 60,000 square feet of floor area or more would be required to have five percent of their total floor area developed with qualifying arts and entertainment-related uses. These arts and entertainment-related uses could be located anywhere within the new development but would be required to be accessible from 125th Street.

In addition, along the entire corridor, special regulations would promote creation of arts and entertainment uses, such as museums, galleries, performance venues, book, music and record shops and restaurants. For instance,

- In order to ensure that appropriate "active" uses such as retail, arts and entertainment have sufficient frontage on 125th Street at the ground floor level, the Special District will limit frontage in new developments for certain uses such as banks, offices and hotels.
- Based on public feedback during the City's extensive outreach, a further incentive for arts uses is also being studied through which bonus floor area would be permitted in exchange for providing space for non-profit arts uses.

The plan would impose height limits where they do not exist today as well as other urban design requirements. For instance, the plan specifies that the buildings could rise to a maximum of 160 feet on the south side of 125th Street – no higher than the Theresa Towers -- and 290 feet on the north side of the street. Buildings would be required to have a 60 to 85-foot base above which a 15-foot setback would be mandated.

To the east and west of the higher density business core would be more moderate density buildings. Also, in order to preserve the special character of the area's notable brownstone blocks, building height in these areas would be capped at 70 feet.

The plan also includes an inclusionary housing bonus to catalyze the creation or preservation of income-targeted housing by limiting floor area unless affordable units are provided. Affordable housing was identified as a priority during many of the public meetings that informed development of the 125th Street plan. Inclusionary housing is an integral component of the 125th Street plan as residential, or mixed commercial and residential buildings, will only be able to reach their maximum densities if 20 percent of their residential floor area is provided as income-targeted affordable housing. Coupled with this density bonus, the City offers a strong package of housing subsidy programs to create a more powerful incentive for providing affordable housing. The highly successful inclusionary housing program is part of the Mayor's New Housing Marketplace Plan to provide 165,000 units over ten years, and is already bearing fruit in neighborhoods such as Greenpoint-Williamsburg in Brooklyn.

Today's certification of the 125th Street rezoning officially begins the City's seven month Uniform Land Use Review Process (ULURP), with formal review by Community Boards 9, 10 and 11, the Borough President, the Borough Board, the City Planning Commission and City Council. For more information on [ULURP](#) or further details on the [125th Corridor plan](#), please visit the Department of City Planning web page.

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### **Department of City Planning**

The Department of City Planning is responsible for the City's physical and socioeconomic planning, including land use and environmental review; preparation of plans and policies; and provision of technical assistance and planning information to government agencies, public officials, and community boards.