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CITY PLANNING BEGINS PUBLIC REVIEW FOR ZONING TO REINFORCE THE VIBRANT RETAIL CHARACTER OF THREE UPPER WEST SIDE AVENUES

January 3, 2012 -- City Planning Commissioner Amanda M. Burden today announced the beginning of public review for new zoning that would reinforce the character of the Upper West Side's main shopping streets. The proposed regulations will help ensure that over time the general multi-store character of Amsterdam and Columbus avenues would be maintained, while promoting a more varied and active retail environment on Broadway. These zoning tools have been crafted to respond to community concerns about the potential erosion of the Upper West Side's unique commercial character and to support active pedestrian retail streets.

The [Upper West Side Neighborhood Retail Streets Initiative](#) is the result of a partnership with Manhattan Community Board 7 and elected officials and extensive outreach with Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), local property owners and other stakeholders. The proposed regulations reflect the existing local retail dynamic while still allowing flexibility for property owners and retailers to invest and provide necessary goods and services on the Upper West Side.

Commissioner Burden said, "The Upper West Side's traditional retail streets offer diverse retail services to one of the most dense and vibrant residential neighborhoods in the city. These successful corridors provide services, jobs, housing and open space all within a walkable area. I was delighted to work with the community and elected officials to craft the Upper West Side Neighborhood Retail Street Initiative. This modest proposal would help maintain the existing vibrant retail character along Broadway, Amsterdam and Columbus avenues by providing a framework for new establishments that builds on the strengths of these corridors, ensuring that over the long term they continue to serve the needs of Upper West Side residents."

City Council Member Gale A. Brewer said, "Diverse retail has always been the soul of our neighborhoods, and the Upper West Side is no exception. When local stores are lost to large chain stores and banks, our private lives and the community's character are damaged. These retail losses are permanent, and they drive other small business owners from the neighborhood. The Neighborhood Retail Streets Initiative is intended to protect our retail character, and I commend Commissioner Burden and her staff for their leadership. I will continue to work closely with her, the City Council, and all stakeholders to restore balance to our retail landscape, and to keep the Upper West Side a vital place for residents and merchants alike."

"We must do all that we can to ensure that diverse retailers continue to define the distinct character of the Upper West Side," said City Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito. "I am thrilled that part of the Manhattan Valley neighborhood which I represent is being included in this proposed zoning change, so that it can also be protected from the increasing dominance of banks and retailers that tend to occupy a large ground floor footprint, leaving little room for the diverse small businesses that fuel our local economy. I applaud Commissioner Burden and my colleagues for their leadership on this zoning change and look forward to voting for it in the City Council."

City Council Member Inez E. Dickens said, "I strongly endorse the Upper West Side retail proposal rezoning plan. This proposal will preserve the historic fabric of the Upper West Side that provides a diverse repository of unique small businesses, a place where the entrepreneurial spirit can flourish, and economic stability that yields jobs and job training experiences. I congratulate my colleague, Council Member Gale Brewer, who I work very closely with on her careful attention to every aspect of this plan."

The proposed regulations would be applicable to 73 block fronts along Broadway generally bounded by West 73rd and 110th streets, and 77 block fronts along on Amsterdam generally bounded by West 73rd and 110th streets (except for 87th-105th Streets on the east side) and Columbus generally bounded by West 72nd and 87th streets.

The initiative is comprised of targeted regulations to maintain the general multiple-store character on these avenues, which residents of the dense Upper West Side neighborhood rely on for retail services. This modest proposal would foster over time multi-store ground floor retail spaces within a framework that would maintain the current vibrant streetscape. The proposal would not modify or expand the uses currently permitted under the existing zoning district regulations. As requested by the community, new banks would be permitted, but they could not occupy large amounts of ground floor space at the expense of the variety of retail services. The proposed rules for both commercial and bank frontages on Columbus and Amsterdam, and for bank frontages on Broadway, would apply only to new stores in new and existing buildings. Existing stores would not be affected.

The proposed zoning text amendment will be referred to Manhattan Community Board 7 and the Manhattan Borough President's office for a 60-day review period, followed by a City Planning Commission and City Council review.

Department of City Planning

The Department of City Planning (DCP) promotes strategic growth, transit-oriented development, and sustainable communities in the City, in part by initiating comprehensive, consensus-based planning and zoning changes for individual neighborhoods and business districts, as well as establishing policies and zoning regulations applicable citywide. It supports the City Planning Commission and each year reviews more than 500 land use applications for actions such as zoning changes and disposition of City property. The Department assists both government agencies and the public by providing policy analysis and technical assistance relating to housing, transportation, community facilities, demography, waterfront and public space.