

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 12, 2006

CONTACTS:

Rachaele Raynoff, Press Secretary, New York City Department of City Planning -- (212) 720-3471

Denny Johnson, APA Public Affairs, (202) 349-1006

Roberta Rewers, APA Public Affairs, (312) 786-6395

INNOVATIVE NEW YORK ZONING DISTRICT RECEIVES NATIONAL PLANNING AWARD



Washington, D.C. - An innovative special zoning district on Manhattan's West Side is transforming a former manufacturing area into a vibrant, mixed-use neighborhood including the reuse of a former elevated rail structure -- the High Line -- as a 1.5-mile-long public open space. Developed by the New York City Department of City Planning, the [West Chelsea/High Line Plan](#) is the recipient of the American Planning Association's (APA) 2006 Outstanding Planning Award for a Special Community Initiative.

The plan carefully balances the multiple goals of the area, situated between West 16th and 30th Streets, including preserving and transforming the High Line, creating new housing, and protecting the city's premier art gallery district. "New York planners did an exemplary job overcoming obstacles and meeting challenges," said Carol Rhea, AICP, chair of the APA Awards Committee. "The new zoning district preserves the High Line by allowing owners of land underneath the rail line to realize their development potential. It also creates new housing for West Chelsea while simultaneously protecting the art gallery district that has emerged in loft buildings and garages," Rhea said.

New York City Department of City Planning Director and City Planning Commission Chair Amanda M. Burden, AICP, said, "I am thrilled to receive APA's Outstanding Planning Award for a Special Community Initiative for the West Chelsea Comprehensive Plan. By using traditional zoning tools in an innovative manner, we were able to preserve the High Line and transform it into a one-of-a-kind elevated public open space."

Burden explained that as a result of the transfer of development rights mechanism "we expect that over 5,500 units of much-needed new housing will be developed on the under-utilized former industrial sites, including affordable housing spurred by a groundbreaking expansion of the city's inclusionary zoning.

"At the same time," she continued, "we have fine-tuned the zoning in this special district to protect the city's premier art gallery district, reinforce the built fabric of West Chelsea and provide for light and air onto and around the High Line park." Burden will accept the award for the *West Chelsea/High Line Plan* on behalf of the New York City Department of City Planning at a luncheon ceremony April 25 during APA's National Planning Conference in San Antonio, Texas.

In addition, a 30-minute video about all of APA's 2006 National Planning Awards recipients will be shown at the luncheon. Accomplishments of the awardees will be highlighted in the March issue of *Planning* magazine and on the APA website (www.planning.org).

Constructed above private property in 1930 to provide rail freight access to the West Side's meat market, the High Line is a distinctive landmark of the neighborhood. Wildflowers and meadow grass have colonized the structure over the last quarter century, creating a unique and magical linear landscape. To accomplish this, planners had to overcome the objections of underlying property owners who, unable to realize the value of their property, pressed for the High Line's demolition.

A new transfer mechanism allows landowners to sell their property rights to "receiving sites" on nearby avenues where new residential development now is permitted. The transfer mechanism, in conjunction with urban design controls and other requirements, will ensure that new development preserves light and air onto and along the new High Line park.

The pressure to allow residential development in West Chelsea has been intense for a number of years. The new zoning also includes inclusionary bonuses that will insure that 22 percent of all newly developed housing will be affordable to low- and moderate-income households.

Since its adoption in June 2005, the special zoning district has catalyzed over 17 residential and commercial developments. Architects from around the world are responding to the unique challenges posed by designing buildings adjacent to the High Line. The new zoning, which uses the High Line as its organizing principle, will create an economically-integrated neighborhood with a unique character and enhanced value.

The APA National Awards for Planning are part of a proud tradition established more than 50 years ago, recognizing outstanding community plans, planning programs and initiatives, public education efforts, and individuals for their leadership on planning issues.

The American Planning Association and its professional institute, the American Institute of Certified Planners, are dedicated to advancing the art, science and profession of good planning -- physical, economic and social -- so as to create communities that offer better choices for where and how people work and live. Members of APA help create communities of lasting value and encourage civic leaders, business interests and citizens to play a meaningful role in creating communities that enrich people's lives. APA has offices in Washington, D.C., Chicago, Ill., and Shanghai, China. For more information, visit its website at www.planning.org.

About 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.