

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CITY PLANNING BEGINS PUBLIC REVIEW ON REZONING OF CONEY ISLAND**

*Part of City's Comprehensive Strategy to Save and Expand on Amusements as Year Round Destination and Revitalize Surrounding Neighborhood*

January 20, 2009 – City Planning Commissioner Amanda M. Burden today announced the start of public review for a comprehensive rezoning plan that would re-establish Coney Island as a world renowned year-round beachfront urban amusement and entertainment destination. The 19-block rezoning would create an open and accessible 27-acre indoor and outdoor amusement and entertainment district stretching along the famed boardwalk from the Parachute Jump to the New York Aquarium. The district includes a 12-acre boardwalk amusement park area which will be mapped as parkland in order to enable the city to control, expand on and preserve amusement uses in perpetuity. Under the proposed rezoning, an estimated 1.1 million sq. ft of amusement and entertainment related uses and 800 hotels rooms could be developed in the amusement and entertainment district, creating job opportunities that will last beyond the summer season. New entertainment and amusement uses could include innovative indoor and outdoor rides, dark rides, virtual reality, water parks, IMAX theaters, circuses, performance venues, roller rinks and all varieties of restaurants and catering facilities.

Outside the amusement and entertainment area, the rezoning would catalyze redevelopment of vacant and underutilized land for mixed income housing, a broad range of neighborhood retail and services that the Coney Island community has lacked for decades as well as additional year-round job opportunities. The 4,500 new units of new housing, North of Surf Avenue and West of Keyspan Park, would leverage an estimated 900 units of affordable housing. In addition, in these areas, the rezoning would pave the way for roughly 500,000 square feet of neighborhood retail and the creation of a 1.4 acre neighborhood boardwalk park. This plan is the culmination of an interagency four-year planning effort led by the Department of City Planning and the Economic Development Corporation that has engaged residents and stakeholders from Coney Island and beyond during more than 300 meetings since the release of the Coney Island Strategic Plan by Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg in 2005.

Commissioner Burden said, "Our number one goal is ensuring that future generations can enjoy Coney Island as the world's most unique urban amusement destination. Our plan includes a 27-acre year-round open and accessible amusement and entertainment district as well as significant opportunities outside the amusement area for new housing and neighborhood retail. This needs to be a place where families can take mass transit and enjoy a few rides, or just visit the beach, all without paying an entrance fee."

"Certification into the public approval process is a crucial first step towards the rebirth of this iconic New York City neighborhood," said NYCEDC President, Seth W. Pinsky. "Our plan will create a thriving, year-round destination free from the whims of the commercial real estate market, while improving basic infrastructure, providing expanded neighborhood retail and offering new and improved housing opportunities. Coney Island is at an inflection point and it is crucial that all stakeholders come together to ensure that its next century is no less great than its last."

The current C7 amusement zoning is highly restrictive and has prevented new, investment in complimentary year-round uses that should be part of an amusement district. This once vibrant area is now nearly devoid of economic activity once the summer amusement season is over. To bring new economic opportunities to the area, the City has developed a comprehensive plan for the revitalization of Coney Island that would foster a total of some 6.8 million square feet of new development. The proposed rezoning covers 19 blocks bounded by the New York Aquarium to the east, West 24th Street to the west, Mermaid Avenue to the north and the Riegelmann Boardwalk to the south.

The centerpiece of the plan is the preservation and expansion of Coney's legendary amusements which will be facilitated in part by an innovative new Special District that responds to the unique character and needs of Coney Island. The Special District will encourage a vibrant mix of year-round, entertainment experiences that would complement the future amusement park and help maintain Coney's singular character. The Special District will also provide for urban design controls to encourage varied building heights and building forms that will respect the iconic landmarked structures such as the Parachute Jump, the Wonder Wheel and Cyclone as well as the beach and the boardwalk.

## **CONEY EAST - 27 Acre Amusement and Entertainment District**

- The existing C7 zoning would be modified to encourage a wide range of open and enclosed amusement and entertainment uses to support both existing Coney Island amusements and new attractions, including: water parks, arcades, indoor sporting attractions, performance venues, dark rides and virtual gaming, bowling alleys, movie theatres and a variety of restaurants. The allowable density would be increased from a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 2.0 to a range from 2.6 closer to the open amusements to 4.0 and 4.5 along Surf Avenue.
- No housing or time shares would be permitted in this 27-acre area.
- Hotels would be permitted only along Surf Avenue with urban design controls that would limit location, tower footprints and heights. The base height of buildings on Surf Avenue will range from 40 to 85 ft. Slender towers could range from 150 to 270 feet tall reflecting the height of existing landmarks—the Parachute Jump and Wonder Wheel.
- General retail such as department stores, drug stores, house ware stores, etc would continue to be prohibited. Limited retail accessory to amusement and entertainment uses such as souvenir shops and beach rentals would be permitted and limited in size.
- A nearly 9.4 acre park would be mapped covering the existing open amusement area, linking the Parachute Jump and Cyclone – already mapped parkland – and creating a 12-acre boardwalk amusement park mapped as parkland and therefore preserved in perpetuity.
- Among the new streets in the plan, a new “Wonder Wheel Way” will provide a direct connection between the Parachute Jump and the Cyclone roller coaster via the Wonder Wheel.
- Amusements would be mandated along the historic Bowery and the new Wonder Wheel Way
- Hotel developments within Coney East on lots over 20,000 square feet would be required to provide amusement uses.
- Signage regulations would be the most liberal of any in the city to encourage creativity and whimsy in keeping with Coney Island’s exuberant character.
- 40 foot height limits, requirements for multiple small store frontages and design controls would maintain the Bowery’s low-scale, arcade character. Similar regulations will apply on the new Wonder Wheel Way.

## **CONEY NORTH, CONEY WEST and MERMAID AVENUE**

The proposed zoning would promote reinvestment outside the amusement and entertainment area in the six block area to the west of Keyspan Park, known as Coney West, and a five block area to the north of Surf Avenue, known as Coney North. The plan seeks to transform vacant and underutilized land with a vibrant mix of uses including new and affordable housing and local retail services. Job opportunities for the local residents who live and work year-round in Coney Island beyond the summer amusement season would strengthen the local community. Key elements include:

- Surf Avenue would be revitalized as a major retail corridor with required ground floor retail and entertainment and amusement uses.
- New zoning would encourage mixed-income residential development with urban design controls to encourage a variety of building forms.
- The residential districts would be governed by height limits to channel higher densities to the 120 foot wide Surf Avenue and transition building scale down toward the beach, boardwalk as well as Mermaid Avenue to the north. In Coney North and Coney West, base heights would range from 40 to 85 feet with towers between 170 feet and 270 feet depending on the location. The maximum building heights and FARs would only be allowed if affordable housing is provided. Coney North and Mermaid Avenue could yield as many as 1,800 new units of mixed-income housing, while Coney West would have the potential for as many as 2,700 new units.
- The first use in South Brooklyn of the City’s highly successful Inclusionary Zoning program would incentivize the provision of up to 900 units of affordable housing through density bonuses in the residential districts. The Inclusionary Zoning Program – a key part of the Mayor’s New Housing Marketplace Plan to provide 165,000 units over 10 years -- provides a powerful incentive for the development of affordable housing by allowing developers, including non-profit and affordable housing developers, increased density (within the height limitations) in return

for the development or preservation of affordable units. City, state and federal housing subsidy programs and tax incentives are available to finance units affordable to lower income households.

- Mermaid Avenue would be reinvigorated with a broader range of uses to serve residents of the surrounding community in new buildings at a scale consistent with the existing context.
- In Coney West, the creation of new streets will break up long blocks and improve connections between the adjacent residential community and the amusement and entertainment area as well as the beach and boardwalk, while providing for a more walkable neighborhood.
- Hotels would be permitted on two eastern-most block-fronts of Surf Avenue in Coney North immediately opposite Coney East to compliment the entertainment and amusement district.

All together, the plan would realize a 44-acre public parkland network along the beachfront, – in addition to the boardwalk amusement park -- including a new 1.4 acre neighborhood boardwalk park at Highland View Avenue that would serve the surrounding neighborhood and new residents. In addition to the 9.4-acre parkland mapping in Coney East, actions will include a parkland demapping and rezoning of two surface parking lots currently used for KeySpan Ballpark. Developers will be required to incorporate structured parking garages to accommodate adequate parking for the ballpark and new development. Actions related to demapping these parking lots as well as the long term lease of the amusement area to an (more) amusement operator would also require review and approval at the State level.

Integral to this City's overall strategy for Coney Island are major capital investments in open space as well as a community center with affordable housing and streetscape improvements. All told, the rezoning plan, coupled with the city investment in capital improvements, is intended to catalyze private investment of more than \$2.5 billion. Over 30 years, the project will create over 25,000 construction jobs and more than 6,000 permanent jobs in industries including amusements, tourism, retail, entertainment, restaurants, and hospitality and generate over \$14 billion in economic activity. The City's comprehensive plan for the area builds on the [strategic plan for Coney Island](#) announced by the Mayor in 2005 which called for the revitalization of Coney Island as a year round amusement destination and economic engine.

#### **Public Review**

As part of the City's Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP), the Coney Island rezoning will first be reviewed by Brooklyn Community Board 13, after which it will go to the Borough President, the City Planning Commission and the City Council. For specifics of the [zoning proposal](#) or more details on the [ULURP timeline](#), please visit the DCP website.

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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.