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**CITY PLANNING BEGINS LOWER GRAND CONCOURSE REZONING TO SPUR NEW INVESTMENT, PUBLIC WATERFRONT OPEN SPACE IN TRANSIT-RICH, MIXED-USE LOFT NEIGHBORHOOD**

February 2, 2009 – City Planning Commissioner Amanda M. Burden announced today the beginning of public review for a comprehensive rezoning to revitalize a 30 block area of the Lower Grand Concourse in the South Bronx. The new zoning for this transit rich mixed-use neighborhood will promote the use of underutilized loft buildings and vacant land thereby transforming the area into a vibrant gateway to the borough. One of the key elements of the Mayor's South Bronx initiative, the rezoning will facilitate some 3,400 units of new and affordable housing, while leveraging private development to create continuous public waterfront access and open space along the Harlem River. Building on the success of the nearby Port Morris rezoning, and a resurgence of investment in the South Bronx, the plan retains zoning for light manufacturing while permitting compatible uses to revitalize this strategically located neighborhood. It also includes zoning provisions to encourage the development of neighborhood grocery stores to serve the expanding population as well as the first use of inclusionary zoning in The Bronx to create incentives for creation or preservation of affordable housing.

"The Grand Concourse symbolizes the aspirations of The Bronx and we expect that this rezoning will catalyze new investment and economic opportunities," said City Planning Commissioner Burden. "The Lower Grand Concourse and its adjacent waterfront is an incredible resource that with the ongoing partnership of the community and its leaders, will be integral to the continued growth and vitality of The Bronx."

The proposed rezoning area flanks the lower Grand Concourse from East 149th Street to the north to the Harlem River on the south and west; Morris Avenue is its eastern border. The northern end of the rezoning area is anchored by health and educational institutions; however auto related uses and warehouses of 4 to 12 stories make up the majority of the uses in the area. About 20 percent of the building area is vacant or used for storage. Along the Grand Concourse just to the north is the Bronx Civic Center and one of the city's most beautiful residential boulevards. The area is well-served by mass transportation, including the 2, 4, 5, and 6 subway lines as well as express buses and several major highways. The redevelopment to be fostered by the rezoning would make this area a livelier, more attractive and safer connection to surrounding communities.

The change in zoning is necessitated by the fact that the existing manufacturing zoning designation has not cultivated new investment along the lower Grand Concourse nor does it allow the range of uses that can reactivate underutilized land and buildings that remain following the decline of manufacturing in the area.

To revitalize this area of the South Bronx, the proposed mixed-use zoning will:

- Promote a wider range of uses in this transit-rich area, consistent with the Mayor's strategy for sustainable development, including the renovation of attractive multi-story loft buildings which are appropriate for residential or commercial reuse, while also requiring the development of waterfront open space. The proposal calls for commercial and residential development along the lower Grand Concourse, as well as commercial and residential development and public open space along the waterfront. It is anticipated that the rezoning would result in more than 3400 new units in new and renovated loft buildings.
- Protect important concentrations of industrial activity. The proposal would retain viable light industry by permitting the continuation and expansion of current industrial uses as well as the development of new light industrial uses. The mixed use zoning would allow both manufacturing and residential uses. A vast majority of existing businesses would remain conforming in the proposed mixed-use district. Manufacturing zoning would remain along the rail tracks and Deegan Expressway to the south where industrial uses are thriving.
- Provide new waterfront open space to an underserved community. The rezoning would build upon new 9 acre waterfront park directly north of proposed rezoning area by mapping a 2.2-acre public park along the Harlem River at 144th Street and leveraging private development to create continuous public waterfront access. By leveraging new waterfront development that must provide publicly-accessible waterfront open space, it would revitalize and create a new public amenity for a neighborhood that has long been cut off from the waterfront by industry and infrastructure. A similar approach has proven successful along the Greenpoint-Williamsburg waterfront. As each lot is redeveloped, this new waterfront open space would help create a continuous promenade along the Harlem River and connect the parks to the north with the existing Port Morris community

to the south.

- Encourage the development of new affordable housing. Through the first use of inclusionary zoning in The Bronx, the rezoning would encourage the provision of 600 units of permanently-affordable housing in order to help meet Mayor Bloomberg's New Housing Marketplace Plan goal of creating over 165,000 units of affordable housing over 10 years. Under the Inclusionary Housing program, developers would only be able to build the maximum allowable residential floor area if they provide permanently affordable housing either on site or off site in new or existing buildings. Tax abatements and public financing provide an added incentive for use of the inclusionary program. In addition, the City will soon introduce a brand new affordable home ownership option for inclusionary zoning. This is an important new addition to the program as home ownership has an added stabilizing effect on communities. The city-wide zoning text will be entering public review shortly and it is expected to be considered concurrently with the Lower Concourse rezoning.
- Support development of new neighborhood grocery stores and supermarkets in one of the most underserved areas in the city. Under the new zoning, grocery stores of any size would be allowed as-of-right within the Lower Concourse MX district. Current rules require a grocery store greater than 10,000 square feet to receive a special permit to locate in the area today.
- Regulate building form to match and enhance the historic context and create a vibrant gateway to the South Bronx. New height limits along the Grand Concourse would match existing buildings on the historic Grand Concourse to the north, with six to eight stories at the street and a maximum building height of 12 stories. The heights of mixed use buildings along the side streets would be capped at 70 to 80 feet depending on the location and on the wider corridors, such as 138th and 149th Streets, buildings could rise to a maximum of 120 feet. Contextual zoning districts would require buildings to line up at the street line, providing for "eyes on the street" in keeping with the traditional built character of the neighborhood.
- Create a highly-visible symbol of The Bronx's resurgence along the waterfront through carefully crafted urban design regulations that would shape modest building bases of four to six stories and slender towers of 30 to 40 stories. These rules would promote a varied skyline and upland views of the river while providing for open space and light and air.

### **South Bronx Initiative**

As part of Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg's five-borough economic development strategy, the City has undertaken several development and infrastructure projects in the South Bronx to attract private investment and promote the development of affordable housing, retail, and office space. In 2006, the Mayor announced the "South Bronx Initiative" in an effort to sustain the positive effects of these projects and guide future land use changes and capital investments in the area. An interagency team led by the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Economic Development has worked with multiple local stakeholders to hone in on community priorities and create an economic development strategy that addresses community concerns.

The South Bronx Initiative is a development framework to support the ongoing revitalization of the South Bronx. A shared vision between the community and the City has informed this framework, building upon the existing assets and potential of the South Bronx to improve its neighborhoods with mixed-income housing, attractive retail districts and public spaces, new waterfront destinations, an efficient transportation network, and a diverse economy providing jobs for local residents.

In addition to the Lower Grand Concourse, the South Bronx Initiative focuses on Melrose Commons as well as the Bronx Civic Center along the East 161st Street corridor, where City Planning will soon begin public review on a rezoning to foster a mix of office, retail, and residential development.

### **Public Review**

The Lower Concourse rezoning will now be reviewed by Bronx Community Board 1, after which it will go to the Borough President, the City Planning Commission and the City Council as part of the City's Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP). 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.