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CITY BEGINS PUBLIC REVIEW OF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TO REDEVELOP DOWNTOWN JAMAICA BUSINESS DISTRICT AND PROTECT SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOODS

*Economic Development Proposal Builds on District's Potential
For Airport Related Commercial Business*

February 5, 2007 – City Planning Director Amanda M. Burden today announced the beginning of public review for a plan to rezone 368 blocks of Jamaica, Queens, one of the Bloomberg Administration's largest zoning initiatives to date. The plan would stimulate new housing and office development in Downtown Jamaica while protecting the character of the surrounding lower scale neighborhoods including parts of South Jamaica, Hollis and St. Albans. Building on the Bloomberg Administration's comprehensive five borough strategy to fuel growth to retain and increase jobs throughout the City, the plan capitalizes on the area's excellent transportation infrastructure and proximity to the JFK AirTrain station. It would expand the downtown business district with nearly 3 million square feet of commercial space and add up to 9,300 jobs. The new zoning would provide opportunities for 3,400 new units of housing to be provided over the next ten years in residential and mixed-use developments at higher densities in and near Jamaica's downtown. The Department of City Planning (DCP) and New York City Economic Development Corporation (EDC) are spearheading the multi-agency planning effort for the Administration.

"Jamaica with its pivotal location and transit infrastructure has all the ingredients for success, and we are determined to make it a center of opportunity with far reaching appeal for the community and our city. Queens airports are assets that we need to mine to capture our share of international business and the jobs they bring for New Yorkers," said Ms. Burden. "Through the expansion of commercial and residential opportunities, we expect Jamaica to take its place among the City's great transit-rich regional business districts. Directing growth to Jamaica's transportation hub is consistent with the Mayor's commitment to sustainability which will strengthen this vital area."

"Unlocking the potential of mixed-use districts throughout New York City is a key part of the Administration's economic development strategy to offer businesses a diverse array of location options while creating jobs and revitalizing neighborhoods," said EDC President Robert C. Lieber. "Together with Jamaica's superior transportation assets, including the JFK AirTrain station, and its vibrant neighborhoods, a new zoning plan will create tremendous real estate development opportunities and help Jamaica become an even greater hub of activity."

The rezoning, which is located largely in Queens Community District 12 and in part of Community District 8, calls for updating decades-old zoning that has impeded appropriate development in order to facilitate creation of:

- Commercial office buildings and retail development along major corridors such as Sutphin Boulevard, Jamaica Avenue, and Archer Avenue. The plan would encourage roughly 1.8 million square feet of office, 1.1 million square feet of retail, and 200,000 square feet of hotel space.
- Increased residential opportunities at appropriate densities on corridors with good transportation access in and near the downtown area such as Hillside Avenue, Merrick Boulevard, Guy R. Brewer Boulevard and Liberty Avenue. City Planning has developed an Affordable Housing Alternative that would use Inclusionary Zoning to create and preserve an estimated 780 units of permanently affordable housing. It would be similar to Inclusionary Zoning mapped in Greenpoint/Williamsburg and the Queens Boulevard corridor in Woodside: developments would be allowed additional floor area in exchange for providing affordable housing. The additional floor area would have to be accommodated within the height and setback provisions of the new contextual zoning districts. This will ensure a consistent building form compatible with the context of each of these areas. The Affordable Housing Alternative is analyzed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Jamaica Plan and is expected to enter the public review process in April.
- A Special Downtown Jamaica District will be designated covering 71 blocks in order to achieve specific goals for the Downtown. Among the objectives of the Special District: fostering a vibrant mix of expanded retail, cultural, commercial and residential uses around the major transit hubs; and requiring new buildings to provide widened or improved sidewalks, mandatory street tree plantings and active ground floor uses with large windows. Special regulations would require off-street parking proportionate to the needs of each new building.

In addition, on three blocks surrounding the JFK AirTrain Station, the rezoning will be coupled with an Urban Renewal Plan which would facilitate the replacement of underutilized or derelict industrial properties with a mix of office, hotel, retail and residential uses and parking. The plan would also provide for 30,000 square feet of new open space immediately south of the AirTrain. Development on these sites will help incentivize additional private investment in the Downtown.

Building on the City's strategy to support industrial firms, increased densities to facilitate industrial development or expansion would be allowed on 32 blocks zoned for light manufacturing. On 10 of these blocks nearest the downtown and situated between York College and the AirTrain Station, certain community facility uses and a broader range of commercial uses would be allowed, while open, noxious uses would be prohibited.

As part of the Bloomberg Administration's ongoing commitment to preserve the character of the City's lower density neighborhoods, new lower density zoning districts would be mapped on 161 blocks. In those areas characterized by one- and two- family houses, 130 blocks would be designated with lower density contextual zones that prohibit multi-family and apartment house development. On an additional 31 blocks characterized by a mix of lower density housing types, new zoning would preserve the low rise character by reducing the scale and density of new development consistent with the built fabric.

A [Draft Environmental Impact Statement](http://www.nyc.gov/planning) was completed and can be viewed at <http://www.nyc.gov/planning>. The application is being referred to Queens Community Boards 8 and 12, the first step in the City's seven-month public review known as the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP), which provides several opportunities for the public to participate in the process.

In order to build consensus, the City has held over 100 meetings with business and civic organizations, elected officials and other community representatives, and will continue to meet with area stakeholders.

Last month, public review also began on two city applications to provide roadway improvements on principal streets providing access to the Long Island Rail Road and JFK AirTrain station complex. The Atlantic Avenue Extension would create a new one-block through road to improve vehicular access to the transportation hub, and the Station Plaza Enhancement project would improve a vital intersection for both vehicles and pedestrians. These proposed improvements, for which the City is contributing \$19 million, complement the redevelopment planned in the Department's Jamaica Plan. The two projects would improve both vehicular movement and pedestrian safety, reduce congestion and create safer streets at this important transportation hub.

In addition, DCP expects to begin the public review later this spring for its proposal to rezone 320 blocks of the larger St. Albans area to preserve the one- and two-family detached character of this neighborhood, an initiative advocated by Council Member Leroy Comrie.

Further information about the [Jamaica Plan](#) and the [public review process](#) is available on the City Planning site at www.nyc.gov/planning.

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.