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**CONTACT:**

Rachaele Raynoff, Press Secretary -- (212) 720-3471

**STATEMENT BY CITY PLANNING COMMISSION (CPC) CHAIR AMANDA M. BURDEN AT THE CPC VOTE ON THE CITY'S 125TH STREET REZONING**

March 10, 2008 – City Planning Commission Chair Amanda M. Burden made the following remarks at today's CPC Meeting to vote on the City's comprehensive plan for Harlem's 125th Street.

"Today is a major milestone in moving this extremely significant initiative forward towards final adoption. This rezoning will reinforce the 125th Street Corridor as an important regional business district and bolster its historic role as an arts, entertainment and retail corridor.

"This comprehensive planning effort has been carefully crafted to maintain and enhance 125th Street's unique and varied character, and its identity as Harlem's Main Street. It will establish, for the first time, height limits and an urban design framework to guide future development on this world renowned street, it will preserve many of Harlem's extraordinary brownstone blocks and help build on the historic strengths of this corridor and its community. It will encourage mixed use development, catalyzing the production of commercial, office, retail, residential, arts and entertainment uses to enliven the street during the day and in the evening.

"And, very importantly, for the first time in Upper Manhattan, it will utilize the Inclusionary Housing program and create opportunities for income targeted housing. The proposed zoning contains a number of innovative and special provisions that will strengthen arts, culture and entertainment and promote a vibrant retail and pedestrian environment.

"The proposed Arts Bonus – a first for the city – will incentivize the creation of not-for-profit visual and performing arts space as well as rehearsal space. Coupled with a requirement for entertainment related uses, this rezoning will result in a wider variety of retail and arts and entertainment offerings creating an economic engine for the city, with thousands of jobs and an even greater appeal as a significant cultural destination.

"A hallmark of this rezoning has been the extensive public engagement which has shaped the land use review process. All told, the Department has held well over 170 meetings with stakeholders and elected officials on this plan. It has benefited from their wisdom, and we have made a number of modifications to respond to issues of concern.

"The Department has recommended a number of modifications, including a modification to reduce the potential residential presence on the corridor by prohibiting residential lobbies on 125th Street in the Core area, in those cases where a development also has frontage on the Avenues or Boulevard or on 126th or 124th streets. Other modifications extend the bonus to rehearsal and below grade performance space and added enforcement measures will ensure continuous use of the bonused space by bona-fide not-for-profit organizations.

"We believe that these modifications strengthen the rezoning proposal and enhance this comprehensive, long range strategy to maintain and enhance 125th Street's unique character as Harlem's Main Street.

"This milestone could not have been reached without our agency partners which include HPD, whose Commissioner Shaun Donovan spoke to the Commission two weeks ago about the City's commitment to providing income targeted housing. Others include: the Departments of Cultural Affairs, Small Business Services, the Economic Development Corporation, the Landmarks Preservation Commission, Department of Transportation, Parks Department and many more, ably coordinated by the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Economic Development.

"The Department will continue to work closely with the interagency group coordinated by Deputy Mayor Lieber as we seek to address issues of concern to local elected officials and other stakeholders.

"I'd like to personally thank Ken Knuckles, head of UMEZ and Vice-Chair of the Commission for his counsel and support. UMEZ has been a valued partner in our efforts to shape the future of development on 125th Street.

"I look forward to the continued partnership of Council members Dickens, Jackson and Mark-Viverito who have shown exceptional leadership in ensuring that the plan fulfills the objectives and the priorities that we, together with the community, set out to achieve.

“With the modifications I have described, I am especially proud to vote yes.”

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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.