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CONTACTS:

Rachaele Raynoff (City Planning) -- (212) 720-3471

CITY PLANNING INTRODUCES ZONING TO ENCOURAGE CAR SHARING

Measure would promote greener transportation option, reducing individual car ownership, congestion and pollution in keeping with PlaNYC

April 26, 2009 – City Planning Commissioner Amanda M. Burden today announced the beginning of public review for new zoning that would promote and expand the use of car sharing. “Car-share” is a simple and easy way to reserve a car by-the-hour at a convenient location through a membership organization. Car sharing can provide New Yorkers with a wider range of economical transportation choices by enabling them to reserve cars as needed, rather than owning and maintaining a car for only occasional use. City Planning’s proposal would allow car sharing vehicles to park in garages and lots in appropriate locations with space limitations depending on neighborhood density. Car sharing offers members significant cost savings over car ownership, and results in fewer people owning cars, less demand for parking spaces in residential neighborhoods and a reduction in both driving and greenhouse gas emissions, consistent with goals of PlaNYC.

Commissioner Burden said, “As part of our growing commitment to promote cleaner air and affordable transportation options to New Yorkers, we are excited to advance this zoning change to bring the benefits of car sharing to communities throughout the city. By facilitating this efficient and affordable transportation alternative, we expect to give families more choice in transportation, increase New Yorkers’ mobility, reduce neighborhood parking woes and traffic congestion and ensure cleaner air, quieter streets and an improved quality of life.”

Car sharing is a relatively new concept in which a private company or non-profit organization makes vehicles available to members on an hourly basis. Car sharing allows an individual who has registered as a member to use vehicles on an as-needed basis. Rather than paying the costs of owning, maintaining, insuring and parking a car, car share users pay only for the time they use the car. Members reserve a vehicle ahead of time via the internet or phone, go to the designated parking space where the vehicle is located, drive the vehicle out and then return the vehicle at the end of the reserved time to the same parking space. The car sharing model did not exist when the Zoning Resolution was written, and therefore current zoning does not offer clear guidance for where car sharing vehicles can be located. The proposed rules will clarify where car share vehicles can be located.

Under the [proposal](#), car share vehicles will be permitted to locate in greater numbers in higher density neighborhoods and in public parking facilities where there are concentrations of existing and potential customers. They will be limited to larger garages and lots in lower density multi-family residential districts and commercial, manufacturing and community facility parking. Car share vehicles will generally not be permitted to be based in one and two- family residential areas. This change, if approved, would be applicable to both new and existing garages and lots throughout the city.

Individual parking facilities can choose whether to allow access to self-serve car sharing vehicles. The number of vehicles that car share operators locate in an area will be determined by market demand, with vehicles placed only where they will be used and provide benefits. In addition to allowing for car sharing vehicles to occupy up to 40 percent of the spaces in public parking lots and garages -- of which there are more than 1,800 in the city -- car sharing vehicles would be permitted to occupy up to 20 percent of spaces in higher density residential parking facilities or 10 percent of the spaces in other accessory parking facilities. ([Chart for proposed regulations by zoning district.](#))

Enabling the dispersal of car share vehicles throughout the city will give New Yorkers greater access to destinations that are not easily accessible by transit for shopping, errands, recreation, and other trips, without the need for owning a car.

Studies show that because the price paid by members is based primarily on the duration of their use of the car, car sharing members plan their trips carefully, combine multiple errands into a single linked trip and thus drive fewer miles. An extensive study of car sharing in the San Francisco Bay Area showed that over several years, membership reduced the amount people drove by two thirds.

Roughly 40 to 50 members typically share the use of each car share vehicle, rather than one or two people per

privately owned automobile. When car share vehicles are located in a community, there are fewer cars needed, reducing demand for parking. And national studies show that as many as a third of car share members give up a vehicle, meaning that each car sharing vehicle replaces the need for multiple private cars.

There are three known car share organizations currently operating in New York City, ZipCar, Connect by Hertz and Mint Cars On-Demand. The largest of these claims over 100,000 members in the metropolitan area and over 1,500 vehicles. Given the experience of car share companies in New York City and other metropolitan areas, membership in these car share services is likely to grow, and the industry expects the zoning will enable further expansion of the service in the City.

The car share zoning would expand on the City's PlaNYC commitment to reduce its carbon footprint and promote sustainable transportation for a greener and healthier city. Last October, the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) also announced plans for a pilot a car-share program in Lower Manhattan that would reduce the agency's fleet size. The car share vehicles would be used by the agency during business hours, and made available to individual car-share subscribers during evenings and weekends, expanding the availability of car sharing when demand is greatest.

Department of City Planning

The Department of City Planning (DCP) promotes strategic growth and development in the City, in part, by initiating comprehensive, consensus-based planning and zoning changes for individual neighborhoods and business districts. It supports the City Planning Commission and each year reviews more than 500 land use applications for actions such as zoning changes and disposition of City property. The Department assists both government agencies and the public by providing policy analysis and technical assistance relating to housing, transportation, community facilities, demography and public space.