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May 5th, 2008

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CITY PLANNING BEGINS PUBLIC REVIEW FOR REZONING IN THE EAST VILLAGE AND LOWER EAST SIDE

Proposal Would Protect Historic Scale and Provide Opportunities for Affordable Housing

May 5, 2008 - City Planning Commissioner Amanda M. Burden today announced the beginning of public review for the Department's comprehensive rezoning proposal covering over 110 blocks in the East Village and Lower East Side neighborhoods in Manhattan Community District 3. Developed over a three year period, with extensive input from Community Board 3, local civic groups and elected officials, the proposed rezoning would protect the scale of these low-rise neighborhoods by establishing height limits for the first time. The proposal would provide opportunities for affordable housing by allowing modest growth with inclusionary housing along the wider avenues. These corridors would also be subject to a height limit.

The proposal fosters Mayor Bloomberg's sustainable planning goals by promoting the preservation of neighborhoods with special character while also providing opportunities for modest growth and affordable housing along wide corridors well served by bus or subway lines.

"The East Village and the Lower East Side communities are celebrated as historic gateways for immigrants as well as the birthplace of New York's counterculture," said Commissioner Amanda M. Burden. "Today's outdated zoning allows buildings to be constructed at heights that threaten the area's distinct scale and character. Working closely with the community, we have developed a comprehensive plan that respects and preserves these vitally important neighborhoods."

The proposed rezoning area is generally bounded by East 13th Street to the north, Avenue D to the east, Grand and Delancey streets to the south, and Third Avenue and the Bowery to the west.

Existing built conditions in the rezoning area reflect a consistent and long-established neighborhood character, with heights ranging from four to seven stories. Recent development trends have taken advantage of 45-year old outdated zoning and produced buildings that are taller and bulkier than the established character, rising 20 stories and higher. The current zoning (R7-2 and C6-1) has no height limits, encourages buildings to be set back at the street line and allows for community facility or commercial development at a density that is nearly double than what is allowed for residential development.

City Planning's proposal, which reflects continuing consultation with Community Board 3, community groups and elected officials, would:

- Protect the established neighborhood scale and character by introducing a blend of contextual zoning districts throughout the entire rezoning area (for the lower rise areas: R7A, C4-4A, R7B, R8B; height limits of 80 feet, 80 feet, 75 feet and 75 feet, respectively and for the modest growth on wider corridors, R8A, C6-2A; both with height limits of 120 feet).
- 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.
- Provide modest opportunities for residential growth and incentives for affordable housing along the area's widest streets well served by mass transit. These include: Houston, Delancey and Chrystie streets and Avenue D as well as portions of Pitt Street and Second Avenue. The proposal would map C6-2A and R8A districts spurring approximately 340 affordable housing units through the [inclusionary housing program](#). Under this program buildings can only achieve the maximum allowable density if they provide 20 percent of their floor area as permanently affordable housing, subject to the 120 foot overall height limit. Tax abatements and public financing provide an added incentive for use of the inclusionary program.
- Reduce permitted floor area for community facilities by nearly 40 percent through much of the rezoning area. In all cases, the allowable density for community facilities and commercial uses will be equal to or less than what would be permitted for residential development.

The community has provided significant input that has helped shape and refine the proposal. Key components stem from this dialogue:

- Adding a further layer of zoning protection, the proposal was fine-tuned to include an R8B zoning district within the midblocks north of Houston. R8B has lower height caps (75 feet) than the R7A zoning district (80 feet) proposed for the avenues north of Houston.

- Reflecting the smaller built form and lower density in buildings immediately south of Tompkins Square Park, the proposal would map an R7B district (3 FAR) for the midblocks between Avenue A and Avenue B, from East 4th Street to East 7th Street. This area is slightly lower in scale than the surrounding area which is being proposed at a 4 FAR.
- Responding to concerns regarding conflicts between ground-floor commercial uses and the residential community on side streets such as St. Mark's Place, City Planning has agreed not to map commercial overlays on these midblocks. Existing uses would be grandfathered by the proposed zoning.
- City Planning incorporated the analysis of an alternative proposal into its Environmental Review process, which examines expanding the application of inclusionary housing in the rezoning area to the R7A areas proposed for First and Second Avenues, Avenue A and Avenue C.
- The community also requested that City Planning analyze an alternative proposal to map C6-3A along Chrystie Street. The alternative proposal would allow additional residential density at an 8.5 FAR with a height limit of 145 feet. This higher FAR and inclusionary zoning along Chrystie Street would further increase housing opportunities including affordable housing. The alternative could result in an additional 116 units of affordable housing.

The community board now has 60 days to review the proposal, 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.

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.