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West Harlem Rezoning Begins Public Review

May 7, 2012 – City Planning Commissioner Amanda M. Burden today launched public review for a rezoning of approximately 90 blocks of West Harlem including the historic Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill districts to preserve the scale of its unique brownstones and apartment houses built in the first decades of the 20th century. The rezoning also would reinvigorate an existing light manufacturing area just north of 125th Street by allowing commercial, community facility and residential uses in existing and new buildings to promote economic development and job creation. In addition to preserving the context of the largely built out area of West Harlem, the rezoning would also promote new development at one location along West 145th Street near its intersection with Broadway by expanding commercial and residential development opportunity and providing incentives for affordable housing. The result of five years of extensive community engagement including several town hall meetings, the proposed rezoning fulfills a promise made by the Bloomberg Administration to Community Board 9, West Harlem residents, area stakeholders, Councilmember Jackson and the Borough President in 2007 for a plan to ensure appropriately scaled development and to provide opportunities for affordable housing.

Commissioner Burden said, "This comprehensive proposal, developed in close consultation with the community and local elected officials, will protect the scale and character of this unique Manhattan residential neighborhood for many years to come. The rezoning will guide future development so that it complements West Harlem's beautiful Beaux Arts, Queen Anne and Romanesque Revival brownstones and apartment houses."

West Harlem is a vibrant, diverse community comprising the neighborhoods Hamilton Heights, Sugar Hill and a portion of Manhattanville. Approximately twenty percent of the rezoning area is located within New York City historic districts. West Harlem is primarily mapped with two medium-density residential districts, R7-2 and R8, generally located north of West 130th Street. These height factor zoning districts allow buildings to set back from the street line and have no height limits, which result in "tower-in-the-park" developments that are not compatible with West Harlem's brownstones and mid-rise apartment buildings. Accordingly, the rezoning plan seeks to preserve West Harlem's existing built context.

The West Harlem rezoning plan complements Community Board 9's adopted 197-a plan and the Borough President's West Harlem Plan, focusing on the area generally bounded by West 126th and West 155th streets, between Riverside Drive and Edgecombe, Bradhurst and Convent avenues. It aims to:

Promote neighborhood character: Roughly 95 percent of the area would be preserved through contextual zoning designations that limit building heights to ensure predictable building forms that better match the existing neighborhood character. The proposed zoning plan would provide maximum building heights throughout the district. Along St Nicholas and Amsterdam Avenues, this would result in buildings of six to eight stories (R7A), with buildings of 10 to 12 stories on Broadway and Edgecombe Avenue (R8A). R6A districts, proposed for lower scale residential mid-blocks, would allow buildings with lower densities and heights that are more compatible with their low-rise built context and scale. The proposed zoning would also require apartment buildings to line up at the street line and brownstones to line up with neighboring buildings. New buildings would be required to set back above street walls to reduce their visual impact from the street level.

The plan would also reduce the permitted floor area for community facilities in the residential areas of the rezoning, bringing it more in line with what would be permitted for residential development.

Direct future development opportunities to one block along West 145th Street near Broadway: Unlike the predominantly built-out residential character of much of the rezoning area, the portion of West 145th Street between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue contains two-story commercial structures that present opportunities for economic development and affordable housing directly adjacent to mass transit.

- A C6-3X district at the intersection of Broadway and West 145th Street would promote a mix of uses including retail, commercial office, community facility and residential. Moreover, retail and commercial uses, currently limited to the ground floor, would be allowed on upper floors to expand and support future commercial development. The maximum allowable floor area and height of 17 stories could only be achieved through provision of permanently affordable housing through the Inclusionary Housing program.

Inclusionary Housing offers a floor area bonus to catalyze the creation or preservation of permanently affordable housing. Under this program buildings can only achieve the maximum allowable density if they provide 20 percent of their residential floor area as permanently affordable housing, subject to the overall height limits specified in the respective zoning districts. Coupled with this density bonus, the City offers a strong package of housing subsidy programs to create a more powerful incentive for providing affordable housing. The highly successful inclusionary housing program is part of the Mayor's New Housing Marketplace Plan to provide 165,000 units by 2014, and is already bearing fruit in neighborhoods throughout the city where it has been applied.

- East of the proposed C6-3X district, the plan calls for an R8A contextual district with Inclusionary Housing to foster mixed-income residential buildings with a base of six to eight stories and an overall height of 10 - 12 stories after setback above the base.

The plan would also preserve built out block fronts on remaining areas of West 145th Street by requiring future development to have heights consistent with the existing built residential character along the corridor.

Support and enhance mixed-use development and job creation in the M-district: As the community envisioned in its 197a plan, to attract private investment and incentivize future mixed-use development, the rezoning proposes to increase permitted density and expand allowable uses in a four-block area near the 125th stop of the #1 train generally bounded by West 126th and West 130th streets, Amsterdam and Columbus avenues. Development in this area is constrained by a low density M1-1 manufacturing district. The proposed MX District (MX1-5/R7-2) allows for increased commercial, community facility and light manufacturing development that could include retail, arts production uses and exhibition space, offices and other non-profit and commercial anchors. The MX District also permits medium-density residential use, has street wall requirements and limits building height for all uses to six to eight stories at the base with a maximum height of roughly 11 to 13 stories after an initial setback or up to 17 stories with an additional "penthouse rule" setback.

The proposed MX district would facilitate redevelopment of the former Taystee Bakery complex on West 126th Street, a partially demolished and vacant four-story factory that occupies approximately three quarters of an acre. The factory closed in the late 1970s and has sat vacant since. After several unrealized efforts to redevelop the site, in 2010 the City issued an RFEI (Request for Expression of Interest) to redevelop the site; in July 2011, the City awarded the property to a local developer to advance CREATE @ Harlem Green - a large commercial/industrial project to house businesses from creative industries. The \$100-million project would provide approximately 328,000 square feet of new floor space to be divided among manufacturing, commercial office, retail, and community facility space, bringing about 440 permanent jobs and 510 construction jobs to West Harlem. It will also preserve the building's original façade. The rezoning will allow the expansion of these buildings, which the current zoning would not have allowed, and will provide space for development of a mixed-use facility.

Provide support for existing ground floor retail uses: To accommodate existing ground floor retail uses and meet the need for future ground floor commercial space, the rezoning plan includes the mapping of new commercial overlays along portions of West 145th Street between Riverside Drive and Broadway and between Amsterdam and St. Nicholas avenues, and along Hamilton Place north of West 141st Street.

The rezoning plan fosters the Bloomberg Administration'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 served by mass transit.

Community Board 9 now has 60 days to review the proposal, after which it will go to the Borough President, the City Planning Commission and the City Councils part of the City's Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP). For specifics of the rezoning or on the ULURP timeline, please visit the [DCP website](#).

Department of City Planning

The Department of City Planning (DCP) promotes strategic growth, transit-oriented development, and sustainable communities in the City, in part by initiating comprehensive, consensus-based planning and zoning changes for individual neighborhoods and business districts, as well as establishing policies and zoning regulations applicable citywide. 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, waterfront and public space.