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**CITY PLANNING COMMISSION VOTES TO APPROVE COMPREHENSIVE DOWNTOWN BROOKLYN
REDEVELOPMENT PLAN
WITH CHANGES TO ADDRESS LOCAL CONCERNS**

May 10, 2004 – The City Planning Commission (CPC) today voted unanimously to approve a comprehensive plan for Downtown Brooklyn that combines zoning changes and strategic infrastructure investments to create a dynamic downtown with 18,000 jobs in new, desirable commercial space, new housing, retail, open space and improved transit connections. The plan, which is the cornerstone of Mayor Bloomberg's economic development strategy for regional business districts, is designed to help lead an economic resurgence by spreading opportunity throughout the five boroughs. The plan approved today builds on the strengths of surrounding residential communities and also incorporates changes advocated during the public review process by local elected officials, the public and local businesses and institutions. The next and final stop in the approval process is review by the City Council.

The Department of City Planning (DCP) and the New York City Economic Development Corporation (EDC) have spearheaded the planning effort on behalf of the Bloomberg Administration in conjunction with the Downtown Brooklyn Council, a not-for-profit economic development advocacy group representing a number of Downtown Brooklyn's corporate, academic and cultural institutions.

CPC Chair Amanda M. Burden said, "Not only does this plan take advantage of Downtown Brooklyn's rich transit hub and proximity to Lower Manhattan by creating conditions for commercial growth, but at the same time, it provides opportunities for new residential development, better connecting downtown and surrounding neighborhoods and ensuring a vibrant mix of new initiatives."

"It is especially rewarding that we were able to use the public review process effectively to address community concerns while maintaining the focus on our economic and planning objectives," Ms. Burden added.

"Today marks an important milestone in Downtown Brooklyn's history," said EDC President Andrew M. Alper. "The Downtown Brooklyn Plan will encourage new office and residential development, a variety of retail opportunities, and improve the mass transit system—all key elements in helping Downtown Brooklyn capture future economic growth and create new jobs. The Plan firmly solidifies Downtown Brooklyn as the third major business hub in the New York metropolitan region, as well as a thriving cultural and academic center."

The sweeping proposal involves increasing zoning allowances to catalyze development, assisting in the assembly of key commercial and residential sites and undertaking a series of infrastructure improvements including construction of a park atop a new garage to help facilitate the creation of as much as 5.4 million square feet of new commercial space and about 1,000 units of housing.

The Plan for Downtown Brooklyn also calls for the relandscaping and development of both sides of Flatbush Avenue, making it a real gateway to the borough, serving the area's workers and residents as a more pedestrian-friendly connector. The thoroughfare is now largely viewed as a vehicular route off the Manhattan Bridge.

To enhance the mix of residential and commercial development, the Plan requires retail with large windows open to the street, all of which will enliven the sidewalks of Downtown Brooklyn and increase the customer base of local businesses. It also includes measures to foster expansion of academic and cultural facilities.

In developing the Downtown Brooklyn Plan, the City worked closely with Community Board 2 and representatives of neighborhoods encompassed by the plan to address quality of life improvements, including traffic management and parking facilities and historic preservation. Participating community organizations included groups from Brooklyn Heights, Cobble Hill, Fort Greene, Clinton Hill and Boerum Hill.

The Plan envisions the creation of:

- Three new office towers, with as much as three million square feet of space, to be built abutting a newly created 1.5-acre park on Willoughby Street just west of Flatbush Avenue Extension.
- Another office development anchoring the west end of downtown at Willoughby and Boerum Place with a total development potential of nearly 850,000 square feet.
- New residential and office opportunities on the eastern side of Flatbush Avenue Extension, from Tillary to Willoughby Streets and along the south side of Myrtle Avenue, east of Flatbush Avenue Extension.
- Additional residential opportunities along Livingston Street between Smith Street and Flatbush Avenue.
- Expansion of the area's existing academic institutions, which include Polytechnic University, Brooklyn Law

School and St. Joseph's College; more than 32,000 students are enrolled in Downtown Brooklyn in schools with over 900,000-square-feet of campus area.

As part of its public review, the CPC held its public hearing in Downtown Brooklyn to make it convenient for local residents to have input, and heard more than seven hours of testimony. In response to the testimony which included that of Councilmembers Leticia James and David Yassky and Community Board 2, and to recommendations from Borough President Marty Markowitz, the plan evolved to address certain concerns through city commitments and changes to the application:

ULURP Changes

- **Institute of Design and Construction (IDC):**
In an effort to minimize condemnation, and in recognition of the school's contribution to Downtown Brooklyn, the site was removed from the Brooklyn Center Urban Renewal Plan, maintaining the school in its current location. This site was originally selected to open up the entrance to the Willoughby Street office corridor and the Willoughby Square open space. The site will also not be upzoned.
- **Brooklyn Law School (BLS):**
BLS voiced concerns over the designation of an urban renewal site at Red Hook Lane where the school owns property and has active plans to expand. In response, language was added to the Brooklyn Center URP reserving not less than 100,000 square feet for post graduate space on that site.
- **Livingston Street:**
To minimize condemnation, and to facilitate the development of Long Island University classroom space, several other previously designated but never-acquired sites on Livingston and Fulton Streets were also be removed from the Brooklyn Center Urban Renewal Plan.
- **Site 6A/ Block 1118 ("Arena Block"):**
In order to minimize confusion between the Downtown Plan and the arena project, an issue advocated by Councilmember James, no change will be made to the land use designation for the existing urban renewal Site 6A on Block 1118. It remains 'commercial' and was removed from the list of sites proposed for disposition.

Traffic commitments

New measures to improve traffic flow in the area are being put into place even before development begins. Among these are the appointment of a dedicated traffic coordinator for Downtown Brooklyn at the Department of Transportation, a blueprint study of ways to reduce bottlenecks, reduction of government parking on the area's streets and a promise to study a parking permit proposal by Councilmember David Yassky to reserve on street parking for residents in certain areas.

Historic buildings

The attention the Downtown Brooklyn plan has focused on the area has spurred interest in preserving some of its older buildings to complement an improved downtown. Ms. Burden has supported local civic groups in an effort to preserve facades and facilitate adaptive reuse of upper floors. In addition, following inter-agency meetings, the city's Landmarks Preservation Commission has calendared 81 Willoughby for landmark consideration and will look at several other buildings in the Fulton Street area. Landmark designation brings eligibility for preservation funds.

Underground Railroad

In view of the Underground Railroad's great importance has in our nation's history, City Planning and EDC acted immediately to investigate the claims presented at the CPC public hearing of Underground Railroad activity in the area. Following extensive research, no evidence has been found to substantiate the existence of Underground Railroad activity at 233 and 229 Duffield and 434 Albee Square West. Nevertheless, when redevelopment occurs at these sites, test borings will be conducted to ascertain if there is any evidence of tunnels that include Underground Railroad artifacts. Using the criteria of the National Parks Service, if a connection is established to the Underground Railroad, excavations would take place and the findings would be recorded and exhibited in an appropriate location.

The comprehensive plan for Downtown Brooklyn's growth now goes to the City Council for review. More information about the [Downtown Brooklyn](#) plan and [other DCP projects](#) is available on the department's website.

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.