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CITY PLANNING LAUNCHES PUBLIC REVIEW ON REZONING TO PRESERVE SCALE OF CARROLL GARDENS AND COLUMBIA STREET

Fulfills Commissioner Burden's Commitment to Update Decades Old Zoning in the Neighborhood

June 1, 2009 – City Planning Commissioner Amanda M. Burden today announced the beginning of public review for an 86-block contextual rezoning of the Carroll Gardens and Columbia Street neighborhoods in Brooklyn Community Board 6. City Planning undertook the rezoning in response to community and elected official concerns that neighborhood character has been threatened by new buildings and enlargements that are out-of-scale with the surrounding low-rise context. The proposal exemplifies the Bloomberg Administration's successful planning policies to protect the city's lower-density neighborhoods. The rezoning would update over 45-year-old zoning with contextual zoning designations that would establish height limits for the first time and curb out-of-scale development.

"Carroll Gardens and Columbia Street contain some of the most unique, verdant, low-scale and beautiful blocks in the city. I promised the community last November that we would begin public review in June on a rezoning proposal to protect the neighborhood's low-scale character," said City Planning Commissioner Amanda M. Burden. "Today we are fulfilling that promise as well as furthering Mayor Bloomberg's strategy to protect the city's low-scale neighborhoods by bringing zoning protections to these unique areas. This proposal has benefited enormously from the advocacy and collaboration of Community Board 6, local community groups and Council Member Bill de Blasio."

"Preserving our neighborhoods means preventing development that is out of scale and out of touch. Thanks to the hard work of neighborhood activists and Community Board 6, we have begun the process that will ensure that the unique character of Carroll Gardens and Columbia Street will be maintained. I also want to thank Mayor Bloomberg and City Planning Commissioner Amanda M. Burden for being receptive to the voice of the community," said Council Member Bill de Blasio.

The proposed rezoning area includes the neighborhoods of Carroll Gardens and Columbia Street. In response to a request from the local neighborhood group, the initial study area of Carroll Gardens was expanded to include approximately 14 blocks along Columbia Street where residents had similar concerns about out-of-character development. The Carroll Gardens portion of the rezoning area is generally bounded by Degraw Street, Warren Street and Douglass Street to the north; Hoyt Street, Bond Street and Smith Street to the east; 3rd Street, 4th Street, 5th Street, Centre Street and Hamilton Avenue to the south; and Hicks Street to the west. The Columbia Street portion of the rezoning area consists of approximately 14 blocks bounded by Warren Street to the north, a line between Columbia Street and Van Brunt Street to the west, Hicks Street to the east and Woodhull Street to the south.

Carroll Gardens is a predominantly residential neighborhood with 3 to 4-story row houses and some 4- and 5-story multi-family apartment buildings. Smith Street and Court Street are the local retail corridors, and have 3- and 4-story mixed use buildings containing ground floor commercial and community facilities with residential above. Carroll Gardens is notable for its predominantly intact brownstone context and its unconventional street grid on many blocks, mapped in such a way that the row houses on the east-west streets have 30-foot deep front yards (the "Gardens" for which the neighborhood is named).

The Columbia Street area also is predominantly residential and characterized by 3- and 4-story row houses and 3-story New York City Partnership homes. Columbia Street and Union Street are the local retail corridors, with 3- and 4-story mixed use buildings with ground floor retail and residential above.

Under the current zoning (R6), there are no set height limits and tower construction on large lots is permitted. The R6 zoning that has been in place for over 45-years has resulted in buildings that can reach upwards of 12 stories, a contrast to the neighborhood's historic brownstone character. C1-3 and C2-3 commercial overlays, which allow for local retail and service uses, are mapped within the R6 district along most of Smith, Court and Columbia Streets as well as portions of Hoyt, Henry, Union Streets and Hamilton Avenue.

Initiated in response to community requests and developed in close consultation with Community Board 6, local community groups and Council Member de Blasio, the rezoning was crafted block by block to:

- Preserve the row house character of over 80% of the study area by introducing a contextual zoning district (R6B) with height limits of 50 feet. R6B would be mapped on predominately residential east-west side streets as well as the north-south streets of Smith, Hoyt, Bond and Hicks Streets and portions of Henry, Clinton and Columbia

Streets.

- Match new zoning to preserve the established built character by mapping contextual zoning designations (R6A and R7A; height limits of 70 feet and 80 feet, respectively). Along the mixed-use corridors of Court and Columbia Streets as well as other more densely built blocks, R6A zoning would more accurately match the existing built context. On Tiffany Place between Kane and Degraw Streets where existing 7-story manufacturing buildings have been converted to residential use, the proposed R7A would better match the built character.
- Promote vibrant, mixed-use corridors on certain local commercial thoroughfares. C2-4 overlays would be mapped to promote an expanded group of ground-floor commercial uses at specific locations along Smith, Henry and Hicks Street where commercial uses already exist, but where no commercial zoning is present to permit new or expanding businesses.
- Reduce the depths of commercial districts to reflect existing development patterns and preclude commercial intrusions into residential side streets. In certain locations where no commercial uses currently exist and where such uses would be inappropriate with existing land use patterns, commercial overlays would be removed.

The proposed rezoning builds upon City Planning's [Carroll Gardens Narrow Streets Text Amendment](#) which was approved in 2008. In response to community concerns, the Department crafted a solution for the so-called 'wide streets' which were particularly vulnerable to out-of-scale development. The text amendment applied new definitions to these streets, providing height and bulk regulations that are more appropriate to the character of the buildings on these and surrounding neighborhood streets.

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

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