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CITY PLANNING BEGINS PUBLIC REVIEW FOR REZONING OVER 260 BLOCKS IN TWO QUEENS NEIGHBORHOODS

Actions highlight the Bloomberg Administration's Continued Commitment to Preserving Neighborhood Character

June 2, 2008 – City Planning Commissioner Amanda M. Burden today announced the beginning of public review for two Department proposed rezonings in the borough in Queens: 44 blocks of Waldheim, and 220 blocks of Laurelton. Each was crafted with extensive input from local elected officials, community board members, and local civic and homeowners associations. Today's announcement exemplifies the Bloomberg Administration's block-by-block sustainable planning strategy to curb overdevelopment in the city's primarily lower-density communities while providing opportunities for modest growth.

"In 2004, Mayor Bloomberg and I stood with Borough President Marshall and promised that we would work with Queens neighborhoods and revisit decades-old zoning designations throughout the Borough" said Commissioner Burden. "We've delivered on our promise to preserve the character of lower density residential communities while providing opportunities for growth, where appropriate. Since 2002, 28 City Planning rezonings have been adopted in Queens, providing much needed zoning updates for over 3,400 blocks, or approximately one quarter of the borough, an unprecedented amount for any comparable time period."

In recent years, throughout Queens there has been a rapid increase in new development. Much of the development has been out of context with the existing neighborhoods due to outdated zoning that has remained in place since 1961. Updating 45-year-old zoning to create a better match between what is permitted and a neighborhood's built form is critical to fostering appealing and productive communities.

Laurelton

The proposed zoning is the result of close consultation with City Council Member Sanders, Community Board 13 and Civic Associations in Laurelton and would:

- Protect the established neighborhood low scale built character by rezoning more than 200 blocks with lower-density and contextual zoning districts (R2, R2A, R3A, R3X, R3-1, and R4B).
- Provide opportunities for moderate mixed-use growth that is consistent with the surrounding context along 17 block fronts of Merrick and Springfield boulevards through R5D zoning. The proposed R5D would permit all types of residential buildings at a maximum floor area ratio (FAR) of 2.0 and a maximum building height of 40 feet or three to four stories. A C2-3 commercial overlay would be established to encourage ground floor commercial development.
- Allow for local retail and service establishments along Merrick and Springfield boulevards, but prevent the encroachment of these uses onto residential blocks.

Located two miles north of John F. Kennedy International Airport and less than a half mile from Nassau County, the 220-block Laurelton rezoning area is generally bounded by Springfield Blvd to the west; Laurelton/Cross Island Parkway to the east; Montefiore Cemetery and 121st Avenue to the north and North Conduit Avenue/Belt Parkway to the south. The rezoning area is surrounded by the neighborhoods of Cambria Heights to the north, Rosedale to the east, St. Albans to the west and Brookville to the south.

Laurelton is a primarily residential community, although mixed-use residential and commercial buildings are located along Merrick and Springfield boulevards, the primary corridors of the neighborhood, and near the LIRR Laurelton station. Existing zoning designations (R3-2, R2 and C8-1) have been in place since 1961. R3-2 zoning, which covers roughly half of the rezoning area allows for all housing types, including multi-family apartments and rowhouse development. R2 zoning, which allows only single-family homes, covers most of the rezoning area north of Merrick Boulevard and in the center of the rezoning area south of Merrick Boulevard. Along the western portion of the Merrick Boulevard corridor, C8-1 zoning allows for automotive and heavy commercial uses, but no residential uses are allowed.

Waldheim

The proposed 44 block rezoning was developed in consultation with Council Member Liu, Community Board 7 and the

Waldheim Neighborhood Association and would:

- Preserve the predominately one- and two-family character of the Waldheim neighborhood by rezoning approximately 36 blocks in the central and eastern portions of the area from R3-2 to lower-density contextual zoning districts (R3X, R4A, and R4-1).
- Reinforce medium density development patterns by rezoning 7 block portions in the northern and western portion of the area from R6 and R7-1 to contextual zoning districts R6A and R7B. These new zones would encourage contextual streetscapes by requiring 40-foot to 60-foot streetwall with existing buildings and maximum building heights of 70 or 75 feet or seven stories.
- Channel appropriate moderate increases in residential development near major corridors. The proposal would rezone one-block on the west side of Kissena Boulevard between Elder and 45th Avenues from R6 to R7-1, while two lots along Parsons Boulevard would be rezoned from R3-2 to R6A. The proposed R7-1 designation would increase the allowable floor area for residential development from 2.43 FAR to 3.44 FAR. Development would be allowed under the same maximum building envelope established under existing zoning. The R6A zoning on the portion of the Parson Boulevard frontage would permit a range of residential and community facility buildings under a predictable building envelope with a maximum FAR of 3.0 and a maximum height of 70 feet.
- Update commercial overlay zoning designations to be more reflective of existing land use patterns, including removing commercial zoning from residential properties while establishing new commercial overlay zoning at Parsons Boulevard and 45th Avenue where there are existing ground floor businesses

The Waldheim rezoning area is located immediately southeast of downtown Flushing, and adjacent to the Kissena Park and East Flushing neighborhoods rezoned by the City Planning in 2005. The rezoning area is generally bounded by Sanford and Franklin Avenues to the north; 156th Street to the east; 45th Avenue to the south; and Colden Street and Kissena Boulevard to the west.

Existing built conditions in the Waldheim rezoning area consist primarily of one- and two-family homes in the central and eastern portions and six- to seven-story apartment buildings in the western and northern portions nearer to Downtown Flushing. The majority of the one- and two-family homes are currently zoned R3-2 and have not been rezoned since 1961. R3-2 zoning districts allow for rowhouses and multi-family apartments that are inconsistent with the prevailing character. The established development pattern in the area closest to downtown Flushing is pre-war, six- and seven-story apartment buildings with a strong streetwall presence. Current zoning (R6 and R7-1) allows for high-rise apartment buildings with no maximum height limit.

Since April 2008, City Planning has begun public review on rezoning proposals in Queens covering over 580 blocks, augmenting the Bloomberg Administration's ambitious rezoning agenda. Several rezoning studies are underway as City Planning pursues the same successful fine-grained strategy, relying heavily on community consensus building to further protect the character of the borough's distinguished neighborhoods.

The affected community boards now have 60 days to review the proposals, after which each 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 proposals 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.