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June 20, 2011

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CITY PLANNING ANNOUNCES NEW PROPOSAL TO ENLIVEN FOURTH AVENUE IN BROOKLYN

June 20, 2011— City Planning Commissioner Amanda M. Burden today announced the beginning of public review for a new Special District that would enliven [Fourth Avenue](#) in Brooklyn as a local commercial destination. While Fourth Avenue has seen new residential development in recent years and an increased population, ground floor commercial uses to support the new residents has not always followed. To ensure its transformation into a mixed-use corridor, the proposed Special Fourth Avenue Enhanced Commercial District would promote a vibrant mix of active uses, including stores and offices along Fourth Avenue in Park Slope and South Park Slope. The District would require commercial and community facility uses on the ground floor, would restrict residential parking entrances to side streets and would limit lobby frontages and blank walls. The new proposal will help transform the avenue into a more dynamic, pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use corridor.

Commissioner Burden said, "Our goal at City Planning is to foster complete neighborhoods, where commercial and community services, jobs and open space are all within a walkable community. Fourth Avenue is a wide, transit-rich corridor with new housing and residents, but often lacks an active pedestrian environment. This new proposal will help ensure the continued transformation of the avenue into a dynamic commercial corridor and provide much needed services to its surrounding communities."

"I'm very pleased with City Planning's proposal for new zoning on Fourth Avenue to require active ground-floor retail uses in new development," said Councilmember Brad Lander. "Thanks to the leadership of the Park Slope Civic Council, an openness to learn from the past, and a partnership between civic groups, the community boards, elected officials, and City Planning, future development will bring neighborhood vitality – in the form of new stores and businesses – to the Fourth Avenue streetscape."

"Today's announcement is a significant step forward for the continued revitalization of Fourth Avenue. I believe that this proposal will maximize the enormous potential of Fourth Avenue as a vibrant, mixed-use corridor," said Councilmember Stephen Levin.

"In recent years, we have seen Fourth Avenue in my District transform from a largely commercial and industrial area into a more residential avenue. However, shops and community facilities have not appeared as originally envisioned. This rezoning seeks to address that issue and will apply to all new developments ensuring that area residents will enjoy all the benefits of a mix of uses on the ground level," said Councilmember Sara M. González.

"I am thrilled that the City Planning Department is moving ahead with recommendations I proposed in a February letter to Commissioner Burden. This proposed commercial rezoning along Fourth Avenue from Atlantic Avenue to 24th Street—on which it was a pleasure to work with Councilman Brad Lander and the Park Slope Civic Council, among others—will allow for new retail and other appropriate uses while preventing the changes that have resulted in an aesthetically unpleasing environment for pedestrians. For years now, I have called for the transformation of Fourth Avenue into a signature street worthy of the great neighborhoods it traverses, and street-level retail is a necessary requirement to facilitating a vibrant and active street life. I welcome the opportunity to consider and comment on such a text change for residentially-zoned sections of Fourth Avenue during the land use approval process, as we move closer to transforming Fourth Avenue into my grand vision for a magnificent 'Brooklyn Boulevard,'" said Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz.

The proposed rezoning area spans 56 block fronts along Fourth Avenue, between Atlantic Avenue and 24th Streets, in Community Districts 2, 6 and 7. The area was rezoned as part of the Department of City Planning's Park Slope and South Park Slope rezonings, approved in 2003 and 2005 respectively by the City Council. A small area between Atlantic Avenue and Warren Streets in Community District 2 was rezoned in 1993. Since then, Fourth Avenue has begun a visible and dramatic transformation from an auto-oriented, heavy commercial and industrial avenue, to one with a significant residential presence. The rezonings were intended to spur new residential development with a mix of uses on the ground level while maintaining the existing low-scale character of the nearby brownstone blocks.

Fourth Avenue has seen new residential development, but ground-floor commercial uses have not always followed. Instead, residential uses, lobbies and parking garages have taken up ground-floor spaces. While this proposal would not modify or expand the uses currently permitted under the R8A-C2-4 zoning along Fourth Avenue, it would mandate that new developments provide active commercial and community facility uses at the ground floor, supporting the continued evolution of this vibrant mixed used corridor.

Each of the three major components to this Special District seeks to address a specific issue that is intended to promote

diverse commercial and retail developments in this emerging corridor:

- **Enlivening uses:** For the first 30 foot depth along Fourth Avenue, the proposal would require at least 50% of the ground floor frontage be occupied by retail uses. The remaining frontage of the lot could be occupied by other permitted uses, including more retail, community facilities, lobbies limited to 25 feet in width, or offices. Limiting lobby frontages will ensure that the maximum feasible ground floor space be occupied by shops and offices. This flexibility in permitting a range of uses will encourage the development of a varied streetscape, activated ground floor and improved pedestrian experience. Parking and residential would no longer be permitted on the ground floor frontage along Fourth Avenue.
- **Streetscape design:** To enhance the pedestrian environment along Fourth Avenue, and to create a more interactive and social space, new retail and commercial establishments would be required to have a minimum of 50% street wall transparency on Fourth Avenue in the band extending from a height of two feet above the sidewalk to 12 feet in height. Shops and offices with glass storefronts, instead of blank walls or gates, allow pedestrians to look in and window-shop, breaking down the barriers between the pedestrians on the sidewalk and activities inside.
- **Sidewalk continuity:** To ensure an uninterrupted pedestrian experience along Fourth Avenue, curb cuts serving new buildings would generally be limited to the side streets.

The text amendment will now be referred to Brooklyn Community Boards 2, 6 and 7 and the Borough President Marty Markowitz's office for a 60-day review period, followed by a City Planning Commission and City Council review.

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.