

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 20, 2011

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**CITY PLANNING'S WILLIAMSBRIDGE AND BAYCHESTER REZONING
STARTS PUBLIC REVIEW**

June 20, 2011 – City Planning Commissioner Amanda M. Burden announced today a rezoning proposal for 181 blocks in the [Williamsbridge and Baychester](#) neighborhoods in the north Bronx. The rezoning area contains a diverse mix of building types ranging from large apartment buildings to single-family detached homes. In response to community concerns about out-of-character buildings, this rezoning would protect lower density blocks from development pressure threatening the community. The rezoning would instead channel moderate new growth opportunities to wide corridors with better access to transit that can accommodate future growth, including White Plains Road and East Gun Hill Road. The proposal would also reduce the depth of commercial overlays so businesses don't encroach on residential side streets. The proposal, which is the result of close consultation with Community Board 12, the 222nd Street Civic Association and local elected officials, would protect the neighborhood's character and ensure that future development is predictable.

Commissioner Burden said, "City Planning worked closely with the Community Board and the East 222nd Street Block Association to develop a rezoning proposal for Williamsbridge and Baychester that meets the goals of the community and addresses their concerns about out of character development. In keeping with our commitment to transit-oriented growth, this rezoning would direct development away from residential side streets with small homes to blocks that can accommodate new commercial and housing opportunities, creating predictability for residents and business owners. The proposal would also strengthen the area's major commercial corridors, helping them to become more vibrant and inviting for residents."

The rezoning area is generally bounded by the Bronx River and Shoelace Park to the west, the New England Thruway to the east, 233rd Street to the north and East Gun Hill Road, Lurting Avenue, Givan Avenue, and Hammersley Avenue to the south. Several bus lines cross the area, including Bx30 and BxM11, as well as two MetroNorth train stations and three subway lines (the elevated 2, and two branches of the 5 train).

Three main zoning districts – R6, R5, and R4 – currently cover most of the area and allow for new infill developments with higher densities than their neighbors, often resulting in out-of-character buildings. R6 districts, for example, do not have height limits. In addition, the depth of some commercial overlays has allowed businesses to intrude on residential streets. To protect the existing character and promote the vitality of these neighborhoods, the rezoning has three objectives:

Preserve Neighborhood Character

Along all or portions of 60 blocks in the rezoning area with one- and two-family homes – east of Laconia Avenue toward the New England Thruway, between White Plains Road and Bronxwood Avenue from 233rd to East 213th Street, and west of White Plains Road to Carpenter Avenue between East 231st Street and East 225th Street and between East 222nd Street and East 219th Street – the proposed new zoning districts (R4, R4A, R5 and R5A) would protect the scale of the community, ensuring that future development is predictable. Along these streets, current zoning has allowed single-family detached homes to be demolished and replaced with larger attached, semi-detached, and multi-family developments. The proposed zoning would lower the FAR allowed to .9 or 1.25 from upwards of 1.65 and establish building height limits of 35 and 40 feet. Two of the proposed districts would limit new development to one and two-family detached houses, which are characteristic of the areas where this zoning is proposed.

Establish Appropriate Growth Opportunities

On 117 blocks – between White Plains Road, Bronxwood Avenue, East 222nd Street and East 213th Street, along Bronxwood and Laconia Avenue from East Gun Hill Road and East 233rd Street, along White Plains Road from East 222nd Street to East 233rd Street and along East 233rd Street from Barnes Avenue to Paulding Avenue – new zoning would reinforce existing residential patterns and ensure contextual development consistent with the neighborhood character. The new zoning districts of R5D and R6A would allow all housing types with a FAR of between 2 and 3 and establish height limits between 40 and 70 feet (after setting back from the street). This would provide for moderate growth opportunities at an appropriate scale for the proposed area. The current R6 zoning in these areas has no height limits and has resulted in out of character development, while R4 and R5 zoning on other wide streets near transit has failed to produce reinvestment. The goal is to both preserve and protect through height limits and to allow new contextual development to create more vibrant corridors.

R6, R6A, and R7A with commercial overlays C1-4 and C2-4 are proposed to be mapped on sections of East Gun Hill Road, which is well served by transit and home to many local businesses, White Plains Road, an active commercial corridor with transit, and a portion of the major residential and commercial strip East 233rd Street. The proposed zoning would take advantage of the existing activity of these corridors and further stabilize them with neighborhood retail and mid-density apartment buildings. The new zoning would promote new housing and business opportunities and allow a FAR of 2.43 to 4, and building heights of 70 to 80 feet, compared to the current zoning which allows FAR of 1.25 to 2.43 with no set height limits.

Update and Add New Commercial Overlays

To encourage commercial growth, new C1-4 and two C2-4 overlays are proposed to reflect existing commercial activity along East 233rd Street between White Plains Road and Barnes Avenue, along Laconia Avenue between East 227th and East 228th Streets and East 230th and East 231st Streets and East Gun Hill Road between Lurting and Yates Avenues. The proposal also would reduce commercial overlay depths from 150 feet to 100 feet to preclude commercial intrusions into residential side streets. Because these streets are well served by transit, the parking requirements would be lowered from, generally, one parking space per 300 square feet of commercial floor area to one space per 1,000 square feet of commercial floor area. The proposal is intended to promote retail activity and encourage these streets to become more vibrant, inviting and walkable.

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 time line, 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.