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**CITY PLANNING PROPOSES COMPREHENSIVE ZONING AMENDMENTS TO ENHANCE YARDS AND OPEN SPACE
THROUGHOUT THE CITY**

Proposals Would Further Mayor Bloomberg's PlaNYC goals

September 17, 2007 - City Planning Director Amanda M. Burden today announced the beginning of public review for new proposed zoning governing yards throughout the city. The new regulations would prevent excessive paving of front yards by requiring that a minimum percentage of all front yards be landscaped. They would also prohibit steeply pitched driveways in front yards and encouraging rear yard garages to maximize plantings. Excessively tall fences and steps in front yards would also be prohibited. The zoning would clarify definitions of side and rear yards to provide predictability and ensure that all homes have adequate open spaces. Together with the Department's initiative requiring the greening of commercial parking lots this package of regulations will enhance the attractiveness of neighborhood streets, mitigate storm water run-off and reduce surrounding temperatures while furthering Mayor Bloomberg's goals for a greener, greater New York.

"Ensuring that residential developments throughout the five boroughs have adequate yards and green space is critical to creating a livable, sustainable city with a healthy environment and an improved quality of life," said Director Burden. "Landscaped surfaces will absorb storm water, cool the air and make neighborhoods more attractive places to live and raise a family."

"Greening our neighborhood streets while curbing expansive concrete front yards will contribute to quality of life throughout the city," said Council Land Use Chair Melinda Katz, an early advocate for restricting the paving of front yards. "I'd like to thank Chair Burden for quickly responding to my concerns and I look forward to hearing the comments of each community board and Borough President during the review period."

City Council Zoning Sub-Committee Chair Tony Avella, who has opposed the paving over of front yards, stated, "Replacing greenery with concrete not only is an aesthetic issue, it also hurts the environment and overburdens the city sewer system. The Yards Text Amendment has other significant improvements to the zoning which will help to preserve the quality of life in low-density residential neighborhoods throughout the City."

Currently, all districts allow paved front yards, and most allow front yard parking. In some areas of the city entire front yards are paved over with concrete. Proposed regulations would establish a planting requirement for a minimum percentage of the front yard area based on the street frontage. In single-family zoning districts (R1 and R2) parking in the front yard of developments would be prohibited.

The proposal also increases the existing floor area bonus in some lower density districts (R3, R4 and R5) for detached garages in rear yards, accessed by long driveways along the side of the lot. This parking arrangement allows for ample off-street parking and preserves the landscaping in front of homes.

The proposed zoning change would implement new height standards for fences, walls and steps located in front yards. The maximum height for walls and fences would be reduced from eight to four feet, except on corner lots where six-foot fences will be permitted. Exterior staircases that currently have no specified height would be limited to rise to the first story of a residence above a basement.

The proposed zoning text would establish new open space requirements that would ensure that all new developments have adequate access to light, air and useable rear yards. The proposal will also clarify existing yard requirements for irregularly shaped lots and corner lots.

Regulations that were developed to ensure adequate yards in Lower Density Growth Management Areas (successfully implemented in Staten Island and Throgs Neck in The Bronx) would be expanded to other lower density districts (R1-R5) throughout the city. These include:

- Require rear yards for all interior lots. Currently interior lots within 100 feet of a corner and on the short end of a block are exempt from rear yard requirements.
- On corner lots, require one side yard to be at least 20 feet wide
- Require a 30 foot open area behind every building to ensure adequate open space
- Prohibit unsafe steeply pitched driveways by establishing a maximum grade of 11 percent

In addition, the package of changes includes a transition rule for new higher density developments that abut lower density districts. An 8 foot wide yard would be required between the two developments, and the higher density development would be limited to a height of 35 feet within 25 feet of the low density development. This transition rule was first developed for the Jamaica Plan and would now apply to such instances city-wide. For specific details of the [zoning proposal](#) please visit the DCP website.

As part of the City's land use review process, the 59 Community Boards and the five Borough Presidents have 60 days to review and comment on the proposed zoning change. Following receipt of their recommendations, the City Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on the proposal which will subsequently require approval by the City Council.

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.