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September 24, 2003

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PLAN FOR SPECIAL WEST CHELSEA DISTRICT AND REBIRTH OF HIGH LINE AS AN ELEVATED GREEN PROMENADE IS PREVIEWED BY CITY PLANNING

The Department of City Planning this week officially unveiled a far-reaching proposal for the future of West Chelsea that would provide opportunities for new residential and commercial development and facilitate the reuse of the High Line rail line as a 1.6-mile elevated park. The proposed Special West Chelsea District roughly encompasses the area bounded by West 17th and 30 th Streets between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues.

"The Department's initiative recognizes the uniqueness of West Chelsea by reinforcing its premier gallery district and encouraging development in keeping with its diverse built character. Especially exciting is our innovative use of zoning to ensure light, air and public access onto the future High Line Park. We envision that eventually people will be able to walk from the newly landmarked Gansevoort Meat Market through an open space network all the way up to 42nd Street," said City Planning Department Director Amanda M. Burden. "We are engaged in a dynamic, collaborative process to build on the strengths of this special community."

Among the highlights of the Special District:

- The current zoning of M1-5, which permits light manufacturing and commercial uses, would be changed to allow residential and commercial uses at greater density along Tenth and Eleventh Avenues and in mid-blocks in the northern and southern portions of the district. The areas to be rezoned are located outside of the art gallery district and are dominated by parking structures and other auto-related uses. Allowing residential use would also reinforce the existing residential presence on Tenth Avenue.
- The existing manufacturing zoning designation would be retained in the core of the Special District to help ensure continued growth of the art galleries that have been thriving there. Some 200 galleries have opened their doors in recent years, making West Chelsea a destination for art lovers from around the City and the world.
- Regulations specific to the Special District would include a mechanism to allow the transfer of floor area from lots occupied by the High Line and immediately to its west to designated receiving sites for new commercial and residential development. Developers of these sites, mostly along Tenth and Eleventh Avenues, could receive a floor area bonus in exchange for improving and providing access to the High Line, helping to finance the project.
- An estimated 4,200 units of new housing could be added to the district, helping to alleviate the housing shortage that persists in the City. The administration is making every effort to build affordable housing in this neighborhood through inclusionary zoning where applicable, low-cost financing, tax incentives, and the development of city-owned sites.
- New buildings adjoining the High Line on Tenth Avenue would be governed by special urban design controls which allow buildings to connect to the High Line, but provide sufficient setbacks to ensure light and air immediately around the High Line. The proximity of the buildings to the High Line would also enhance safety in the new park.
- The reuse of the High Line as a park-promenade provides needed open space in this community, which has one of the lowest amounts of open space in the city, and enhances the open space network on the West Side.
- As part of an overall plan for the west side of Manhattan, the District is designed to complement existing neighboring character, harmonize with the existing Gansevoort and Chelsea Historic Districts and dovetail with the City's plans to shape redevelopment of the Far West Side/Hudson Yards

Although the plan has not yet entered the formal public review process, the Department has been working closely with the community, listening to concerns and making appropriate modifications. A public hearing on the draft scope of work for the project's Environmental Impact Statement will be held at 10 AM, October 2, 2003 at 22 Reade Street.

About 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.