

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CITY PLANNING KICKS OFF REVIEW OF WEBSTER AVENUE/BEDFORD PARK/NORWOOD REZONING**

*Proposal will Revitalize Webster Avenue,  
Protect Character of Bedford Park and Norwood Neighborhoods*

September 27, 2010 – City Planning Commissioner Amanda M. Burden today launched the official public review of an 80-block proposed rezoning to revitalize a 1.75-mile stretch of Webster Avenue in the Northwest Bronx with residential and commercial development, while protecting the lower scale communities of Norwood and Bedford Park. In order to create a walkable corridor that better serves the neighborhood, the [Webster Avenue/Bedford Park/Norwood proposal](#) would change antiquated restrictive zoning along Webster Avenue that dates to the time of the Third Avenue elevated train, which was demolished in 1973. The proposed new zoning would provide nearly 740 units of new and affordable housing and approximately 100,000 square feet of retail, restaurant, office and community facility space. It would also apply contextual height limitations to reinforce the character of the residential areas to the west.

Commissioner Burden said, “Working closely with Bronx Community Board 7, local institutions and the Borough President’s office, we have developed a plan to achieve the goals identified by the community for the Webster/Bedford Park/Norwood area. Our rezoning will promote investment along the wide Webster Avenue corridor, which is well served by transit, and facilitate its transformation from single story retail with multiple vacancies and underutilized lots to a vibrant boulevard with mixed-income housing and retail. It will also make sure that future development in the Norwood and Bedford Park respects the unique character of those residential communities.”

Webster Avenue is now primarily zoned for auto and heavy commercial uses at a low scale. Existing zoning has hindered investment along Webster Avenue despite the corridor’s width and strong connections to transit, including four subway lines, Metro-North and the BX12 express bus, easy access to highways, and surrounding major institutions, including Lehman College and Fordham University, the New York Botanical Garden and Montefiore Medical Center. Common uses found on the corridor include parking lots, gas stations, car washes, vacant lots, home furnishing stores and a few residential buildings, resulting in an atmosphere that does not encourage pedestrian traffic.

The proposal would promote development of buildings along Webster Avenue containing a mix of residential, commercial and community facility uses. Between Fordham Road and East 205th Street, buildings would be required to line up at the sidewalk with a street wall of 60 to 85 feet in height before setting back, and would have a maximum building height of 100 feet or roughly ten stories.

By zoning the majority of Webster Avenue for the Inclusionary Housing Program, the plan is expected to produce nearly 200 units of permanently affordable housing, helping to achieve Mayor Bloomberg’s New Housing Marketplace Plan goal for 165,000 units of affordable housing by 2014. Under the Inclusionary Housing program, developers would only receive a floor area bonus to build the maximum allowable residential floor area if they provide permanently affordable housing either on site or off site in new or existing buildings. All new buildings would have to comply with the new height limits, even with the bonus. Off-site affordable units must be located within Community District 7 or within a half-mile of the site receiving the bonus. Other city, state and federal housing finance programs may be used to provide further assistance in creation of affordable units. The combination of a zoning bonus with housing programs would establish a powerful incentive for the development and preservation of affordable housing in Bedford Park and Norwood.

The proposal also will foster a commercial hub concentrated along Webster around Bedford Park Boulevard down to East 195th Street with zoning that permits larger retail, theater and complementary uses.

Along most of Webster Avenue, the proposed zoning would require active ground floor commercial or community facility use, enlivening the area for pedestrians.

At the northern end of the rezoning area, around East Gun Hill Road near the medical center, a non-contextual district with a higher density community facility allowance would facilitate development of office and medical-related buildings with greater floor-to-ceiling heights and more design flexibility as part of another commercial hub. Housing and retail would also be permitted in this district.

Three blocks of Webster Avenue north of East 205th Street would retain the existing auto-related zoning because they contain active businesses and a Con Ed facility situated on shallow lots abutting a rock wall, and are not suitable for redevelopment.

### **Neighborhood Preservation**

The Bedford Park and Norwood neighborhoods, covering roughly 41 and 28 blocks respectively, have housing ranging from one to two-family detached homes to small apartment buildings. Existing zoning districts in these neighborhoods have no height limits and permit out-of-character development. Contextual districts in the proposal were carefully selected to match future development to the predominant lower-scaled building types in these areas. The proposed zoning would largely mirror existing permitted uses.

### **Public Review**

The proposed rezoning will now be reviewed by Bronx Community Boards 7 and 12, 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 timeline](#), please visit the [DCP website](#).

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### **Department of City Planning**

The Department of City Planning (DCP) promotes strategic growth and development in the City, in part, by initiating comprehensive, consensus-based planning and zoning changes for individual neighborhoods and business districts. 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 and public space.

### **About Mayor Bloomberg's Five Borough Economic Opportunity Plan**

The Five Borough Economic Opportunity Plan is a comprehensive strategy to bring New York City through the current economic downturn as fast as possible. It focuses on three major areas: creating jobs for New Yorkers today, implementing a long-term vision for growing the city's economy, and building affordable, attractive neighborhoods in every borough. Taken together, the initiatives that the City has launched to achieve these goals will generate thousands of jobs and put New York City on a path to economic recovery and growth.