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**CITY PLANNING COMMISSION APPROVES BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD 8'S PLAN FOR PRESERVING UNIQUE CHARACTER OF DISTRICT'S NEIGHBORHOODS**

October 22, 2003 – Emphasizing the city's commitment to supporting community-based planning, Amanda M. Burden, Director of the Department of City Planning (DCP), today announced the approval of Bronx Community District 8's "197-a Plan" entitled River to Reservoir Neighborhood Preservation Strategy. The plan, approved unanimously at today's meeting of the City Planning Commission, incorporates the community board's recommendations for preserving the district's low-density residential neighborhoods. DCP has committed to implementing rezonings of eight areas proposed by the community, strengthening Special Natural Area Districts and helping the board find ways to tackle remaining concerns which were beyond the scope of a community-based plan. The plan now goes to the City Council for approval.

"Community Board 8's complicated and sophisticated undertaking is an excellent example of how a community can articulate a vision, do the hard work to create consensus and guide its plan to fruition. It has shaped a workable blueprint in keeping with the Bloomberg administration's commitment to protect the unique character of neighborhoods that are among the city's most precious assets," said Ms. Burden. "The Department will proceed with the community board to implement priority zoning actions recommended in the community's plan."

Ms. Burden commended Community Board 8 (CB8) for its tenacity regarding its concern for protecting natural areas as well as for its willingness to engage in constructive compromise. CB8 and DCP have agreed to strengthen the Special Natural Area District (SNAD) and DCP has begun work on this as a joint effort with its Staten Island office. DCP will also examine the community's proposed expansion of the SNAD, and has identified additional areas for protection through SNAD designation.

DCP and CB8 have agreed to proceed immediately with eight rezoning areas in the community where there is a mismatch between what existing zoning allows and the predominant scale of buildings. These areas include sections of the following neighborhoods:

- Kingsbridge Heights
- Sedgwick Avenue
- Van Cortlandt Village
- Kingsbridge
- North Riverdale
- Central Riverdale
- Riverdale and
- Spuyten Duyvil

DCP's zoning changes for these areas will lower allowable density or provide contextual controls at existing densities to guide new development so that it is appropriate to the character of each neighborhood.

William Abramson, former CB8 chair, who spearheaded the plan at the community board, said, "The Community Board and the community have enthusiastically supported the 197-a through the process, seeking to maintain the unique character of our communities as well as identify areas that would be appropriate for affordable housing. We look forward to working with CP to act on the blueprint for rezoning. The success of implementation of all aspects of our plan will depend on the tenacity of the board, community groups and the elected officials."

The 197-a plan, passed unanimously by the Community Board in May and approved by the Bronx Borough President in August, also seeks to improve local commercial districts, improve access to cultural and educational facilities, create additional recreational resources, enhance parks, encourage the greening of major corridors, and preserve and promote the area's historical resources.

Named for a section of the New York City Charter, a 197-a plan provides a framework for development in a geographic area, such as a community district. Under Section 197-a, community boards or other entities may sponsor plans for the "development, growth and improvement" of their communities. A 197-a plan is primarily concerned with land use, but it may also focus on other areas of concern. All 197-a plans undergo an extensive public review process before being finalized. Once approved by the City Planning Commission and adopted by the City Council, a 197-a plan is intended to guide subsequent actions by city agencies.

DCP is also engaged in field studies of several communities in the Throgs Neck area to assess the effects of increased construction there, and will present preliminary zoning proposals in November to address over development and protect

neighborhood character.

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**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.

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