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DCP Director Amanda M. Burden Outlines Ambitious, Proactive Agenda for Spurring Economic Development and Strengthening Neighborhoods Throughout NYC at Packed Crains Breakfast Forum

The text of Ms. Burden's prepared speech follows:

Good Morning,

I'm thrilled to have this opportunity to speak with you today, at this pivotal moment for our city, about how, and where, we are creating a spectacular blueprint for the future.

Mayor Bloomberg is bringing the best thinking to bear on the city's problems, and he has made housing and economic development a priority of his administration.

For the first time, all city agencies responsible for land use and development issues are coordinated under a single deputy mayor, all working together toward a common vision of a world city of opportunity.

In Downtown Brooklyn, Lower Manhattan, Long Island City, the Far West Side and Jamaica, the best minds are putting their heads together to move an almost unbelievably ambitious agenda.

In developing these initiatives, we have looked carefully at conditions in the city; the constraints they create and the opportunities they offer. I'd like to share with you some of these insights and how they are shaping our agenda.

First, the city is growing both economically and demographically.

The 2000 Census counted eight million New Yorkers; the highest number ever enumerated and already within 2 years, by 2002, the Census Bureau estimates we added another 76,000 new, New Yorkers.

We expect the city's population to continue to both attract new residents and to grow in the coming decades.

Why do they come? They seek and, for the most part, find an improved quality of life and economic opportunity.

By 2001, the city was providing more economic opportunity, meaning more people working, than at any time in its history.

We believe, as do respected forecasters, that the city's economy will add private payroll jobs next year. But the trend in payroll jobs does not tell the whole story.

It is particularly noteworthy that self-employment, which rose dramatically in the city in recent decades, was at an all time high in 2001.

The rise in self-employment has helped support increases in average incomes in every borough, and despite payroll job losses in the recession, has sustained the growth we are seeing in many parts of the city.

To the point, the unprecedented housing surge that we are now experiencing represents an extraordinary measure of confidence in the city.

Not since 1985 have so many housing permits been issued; last year over 18,000 units received permits. From January 2000 to this past July, new housing permits were issued for 61,000 units with the largest increases in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens. This is really, really big news.

And this housing boom has been driven primarily by private, not public, investment – something without parallel since the 1960's.

It is our challenge to plan strategically for a city that is adding population and housing units and, over the course of future business cycles, is expected to continue to add jobs.

How can we create conditions to accommodate future economic growth in a city that is already built out to its edges?

How can we provide housing opportunities for a growing population with rising incomes and expectations – and still retain and enhance the very qualities that make our neighborhoods desirable?

We start by building on our strengths - our extraordinarily diverse neighborhoods, our regional business districts that haven't begun to reach their potential, our mass transit system, and our precious waterfront and open spaces.

This time around, we are planning proactively and at large scale, we are setting comprehensive plans in motion citywide. Our objectives are to catalyze change where it is needed within a framework of making great places and protecting great neighborhoods.

If we plan properly today, we will keep New York businesses in New York and more New Yorkers in the best home town anywhere.

In the city's central and regional business districts, we are working on comprehensive land use and urban design master plans to channel and shape anticipated growth in ways that make great places and enhance economic value.

Our basic philosophy is that it is not enough to prepare handsomely bound volumes that sit on bookshelves.

Rather, our plans set forth a vision for an area, and then we, the public sector, undertake the entire land use review process, including building consensus, completing environmental impact reviews, and bringing these actions through the Planning Commission and City Council.

By invoking a series of strategic public actions – regulatory changes, infrastructure investments, and investing scarce public dollars in public space improvements --we can set the stage for private market investment and private market creativity.

Let me take you on a tour of some of our initiatives.

On the Far West Side, in Hudson Yards, we see a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create a major expansion of the Midtown business district. This vast and dynamic area at the heart of our city will provide growing room for the next four decades, enough space for an estimated 100,000 additional jobs.

To help create a unique and special place - a 24-hour community, with new residential and office development, we will create a generous open space network, and add major public facilities including an expanded Convention Center and multi-use stadium and exhibition complex.

The 7 line subway will be extended, providing connections to virtually the entire subway and commuter rail systems.

We have prepared a comprehensive Urban Design Master Plan that ties these elements together and, along with a comprehensive rezoning, will ensure that Hudson Yards will be a great place to live and a great place to work.

This is a multi-year, long-term plan to be built and developed over a 40 year time frame.

In Lower Manhattan, we are working with our partner agencies to shape the Trade Center rebuilding, and to reinvigorate all of Lower Manhattan, with a revitalized East River Waterfront, a robust residential neighborhood, new cultural facilities, a vital and improved street environment, and a score of new parks that will be open this coming spring.

A one-seat ride from JFK into Lower Manhattan – an ambitious but a most important goal - would solidify Lower Manhattan's resurgence as a world-class business district, as a tourist destination, as New York culture and shopping at its best, and as a place to live and raise a family.

Restoring and revitalizing Lower Manhattan and developing Hudson Yards are complementary, not competing actions. Lower Manhattan is a relatively near term action with, at a minimum, the first two buildings completed well before any office development is contemplated on the far west side.

Hudson Yards will be built out over 40 years with the first office coming after the extension of the #7 line which is estimated to be completed in 2009.

If the city is to prosper in the twenty-first century, it will need both its major business districts, to grow.

At the same time, we must also set the stage to capture our share of the region's growth by developing regional business districts throughout the city. We lost millions of square feet of office development to New Jersey in the last decade largely because our regional business districts were not prepared to accommodate new office growth.

To that end, in less than two weeks we will initiate the formal public review of a major expansion of the Downtown Brooklyn central business district which will not only provide for five million square feet of new Class A office space, and university expansion but also new housing opportunities to help foster round the clock street life and forge connections to the great neighborhoods of Fort Greene and Boerum Hill.

Once again, we are not planning one building at a time, or just enacting a simple rezoning.

We are setting forth a comprehensive Urban Design Master Plan, coupled with the full spectrum of regulatory changes and public investment. The plan for Downtown Brooklyn will facilitate a cluster of new office buildings around a new park at Willoughby Street and an entirely re-envisioned and re-landscaped Flatbush Avenue that will finally become a majestic gateway to Brooklyn.

This is one of the most comprehensive plans the Department has ever undertaken, involving 22 land use actions. Once adopted, the stage will be set for private market investment.

In Long Island City, New York's nascent fourth CBD, MetLife's decision to locate and expand its back offices is the first tangible outcome of our 2001 rezoning to foster economic development.

Now our urban design plan will create a sense of place in locations that have long been dedicated to truck movement and parking lots. And, in order to enhance street vitality that is essential for a successful business district, we are rezoning to allow and foster new residential development between Citibank and Queens West on the waterfront, bringing life and foot traffic to this unique, transit-rich, culturally vibrant neighborhood.

We are applying similar principles, combining zoning changes, urban design plans and infrastructure investment, in regional business districts in Jamaica and Flushing in Queens as well as at the Hub in the Bronx.

Each of these districts is being planned in a comprehensive fashion, taking advantage of the different strengths and characteristics of each area. That way we will respond to different markets by providing different products to meet different needs. Each of these districts will be great places to work near some of the most wonderful places to live.

We have, after all, the most diverse and valued residential neighborhoods in the nation; indeed our neighborhoods are our crown jewels: from the towers of Manhattan and the brownstones of Brooklyn to the suburban-style communities of Staten Island and College Point.

One of the greatest challenges we face today is to respect and preserve these distinct qualities that make our neighborhoods desirable places to live even as we seek to accommodate the housing needed by the city's growing population.

In some cases, the surge in new housing, which is occurring for the most part in low density suburban style areas of the city, has created significant issues for residents who rightfully wish to preserve the quality of life in their communities. We are moving quickly to address mismatches between the densities permitted by zoning and the unique built character of these neighborhoods. For the most part, these areas have little public transportation and thus do not have the infrastructure to support housing expansion.

In City Island in the Bronx, Forest Hills and Holliswood in Queens, and numerous communities in Staten Island, we already have undertaken new zoning that will be more appropriate to the scale of these low-density neighborhoods.

Elsewhere, we can make the most of opportunities to build new neighborhoods and to strengthen emerging ones.

Over the past two years we have had considerable success in crafting and enacting a wide range of neighborhood zoning plans in all five boroughs, each with goals matched to differing opportunities and constraints.

The work we are doing in Upper Manhattan, for example is setting a precedent for other parts of the city.

Too often in the past, our plans for Manhattan stopped south of 96th Street. I am extremely proud that, working with the Harlem communities, we have successfully implemented both the East Harlem and Frederick Douglass Boulevard rezonings.

They are the first comprehensive rezonings in Upper Manhattan in more than 40 years. They are truly comprehensive, covering 57 blocks in East Harlem and 44 blocks along Frederick Douglass Boulevard.

Similarly, in Park Slope in Brooklyn and North Corona in Queens, the new zoning will promote new apartment buildings at higher densities on wide avenues while preserving the lower scale of residential side streets.

Our neighborhood plans are producing housing throughout the city for all income groups.

In the face of great fiscal restraints, Mayor Bloomberg has committed, in his "New Marketplace" initiative, more than \$3 billion over the next five years to preserve and create over 65,000 units of housing for low, moderate and middle income New Yorkers. No city in America does more in terms of providing new housing opportunities.

We intend to maintain, even accelerate, the momentum of the past two years. Some of our most ambitious rezonings, such as Greenpoint/ Williamsburg in Brooklyn and West Chelsea in Manhattan, are well under way.

In Greenpoint-Williamsburg two of the most sought after and vibrant neighborhoods in the city, we have proposed a comprehensive plan to enhance and build upon the architecture and mixed use character of the existing community, while opening up a spectacular waterfront that has been derelict for decades. Through an urban design master plan and comprehensive rezoning, we will open up for development 170 blocks which will, in turn, leverage two miles of continuous waterfront access and 49 acres of new parkland.

Here, over the next decade and more we can connect the landlocked upland community to the waterfront, facilitating thousands of apartments in a mixed use setting, and creating an interconnected network of continuous publicly accessible waterfront open spaces and parkland.

Another of our most ambitious efforts is our rezoning master plan proposal for West Chelsea, a critical link between the newly landmarked Gansevoort Meat Market District and the Hudson Yards. Here we are using traditional zoning tools in a totally innovative manner, whereby we will promote new housing in character with the existing building form, preserve and enhance the city's premier art gallery district, and most importantly, facilitate the transformation of the High Line into an elevated public open space.

The High Line is a totally unique structure which, when transformed into an elevated park will transport pedestrians for 22 blocks without coming in contact with a single vehicle. Eventually, the High Line park and the public open spaces in Hudson Yards will allow New Yorkers to walk from the Meat Market all the way to 42nd Street through a network of parks and public open space.

What I have described is a new way of planning. It's not broad brush, like the citywide zoning of 1961.

It is not reactive or piece-meal, like much of what took place afterward.

Instead, it looks at whole neighborhoods, at the needs of New Yorkers, and creates a framework for the future.

Nor has it been top-down. All these projects have been developed with the input of business, community leaders, and elected officials, who, after all, will live with the results.

We have made it a hallmark of the new City Planning to listen, to cooperate, to go forward with consensus, on projects whose scope is unprecedented.

It will be up to you – the decision makers, the people who invest in the city's future, the trailblazers – to bring your creativity to bear, to interpret the framework we are mapping out, and to turn it into bricks and mortar and public open space.

Our comprehensive plans – which we will set in place for you -- will help make your job easier.

By creating AND enacting these planning frameworks, we've taken the guesswork out of projects, paving the way for as-of-right, appropriately scaled development that will benefit New York's business districts and its neighborhoods.

By enhancing infrastructure, by rezoning, by completing the environmental reviews and taking these comprehensive proposals through the entire public approval process, we are creating a more fertile investment climate, saving those who would invest in New York's future time and money, and enabling the private market to respond when the market is ready.

Mayor Bloomberg has challenged each of his commissioners and all city agencies to help create a better

city than the one we found upon taking office.

With this focus, and a shared commitment to invest in the city's future, we have a golden opportunity and, I might add, an obligation to leave a legacy for tomorrow's New Yorkers:

A legacy of communities that people live in because they want to, not because they have to; a legacy of places that inspire; a legacy of open spaces worthy of the greatest city in the world. We are dedicated to making this vision a reality.

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.