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**CITY PLANNING'S LARGEST REZONING – SOUTH JAMAICA—BEGINS PUBLIC REVIEW**

*Proposal would prevent out-of-character development, strengthen major corridors and expand the FRESH program*

November 29, 2010 – City Planning Commissioner Amanda M. Burden today announced the beginning of public review for the South Jamaica rezoning in Queens, the Bloomberg administration's largest rezoning to date. The proposed 530-block rezoning would protect the predominant lower-density character of the area and also provide opportunities for new housing and businesses to strengthen the area's wider corridors. In addition, it would apply zoning incentives for the Food Retail Expansion to Support Health, or FRESH, program to South Jamaica. FRESH provides zoning and financial incentives for grocery stores to locate in some of the most underserved neighborhoods in the City. The rezoning responds to residents' and elected officials' concerns about out-of-character development on residential blocks, and a local civic association called One Block At A Time was formed specifically to partner with City Planning on this important initiative.

"Since 2002, we have rezoned more than 5,000 blocks in Queens. We have replaced antiquated zoning with fine-grained plans that are tailored to fit each unique neighborhood, and we are continuing this practice in South Jamaica, our largest rezoning," said Commissioner Burden. "Not only will this rezoning protect the many blocks lined with one- and two-family homes in South Jamaica, it will bring the innovative and critically important FRESH program to the neighborhood. By providing incentives for new and expanded full-line grocery stores, FRESH promotes healthy lifestyles and provides more access to fresh produce for residents, which will combat the twin epidemics of obesity and diabetes. Our largest rezoning also serves as a legacy for the late Council Member Thomas White Jr., who worked closely with us on this plan and was truly dedicated to and passionate about improving southeast Queens."

The rezoning area is located in the southern and western portions of Queens Community District 12, and this rezoning completes the Bloomberg administration's commitment to the Community Board to update zoning throughout the district to provide more predictable and sustainable development. The rezoning area is generally bounded by Liberty Avenue, 108th Avenue and South Road to the north; Merrick and Springfield Boulevards to the east; North Conduit Avenue to the south; and the Van Wyck Expressway to the west. The proposal builds on the success of the Department's earlier rezonings in Community District 12, including Jamaica (adopted in 2007), St. Albans/Hollis (adopted in 2007) and Springfield Gardens (adopted in 2005).

**The proposal has three goals:**

**Neighborhood Preservation**

The rezoning would replace zoning districts that date to 1961 on approximately 530 blocks with lower-density and contextual districts that will more closely reflect the building patterns of one- and two-family houses found throughout South Jamaica. Current zoning allows a variety of housing types to be built in the neighborhood, and residents were concerned about out-of-character development on the low-scale residential blocks. These zoning changes would limit future residential development to housing types that match existing contexts.

**Strengthening Major Corridors**

Along portions of wider corridors in the area – including Sutphin, Merrick, and Rockaway Boulevards, where retail and services currently exist – the proposal would establish moderate-density districts to encourage appropriately-scaled new housing and businesses in these locations. The rezoning would establish contextual building height limits (between 30 and 40 feet) and also reduce the depths of the commercial overlays on these streets to prevent commercial uses from encroaching on residential blocks.

**Expanding FRESH**

In response to community needs and interest, the FRESH program would be expanded to include South Jamaica. FRESH was developed in partnership with the City Council. It provides zoning and financial incentives – through City Planning and the Economic Development Corporation – to property owners, developers and grocery store operators in low income and underserved neighborhoods.

The neighborhood grocery store is a basic necessity for all New Yorkers. City Planning worked closely with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to analyze the widespread shortage of supermarkets and grocery stores in the City, and found that neighborhoods that were underserved and also low income were the very same areas that had high rates of obesity and diabetes. The FRESH program is designed to encourage healthy

lifestyles by promoting neighborhood-scale supermarkets (between 6,000 and 30,000 square feet) that carry fresh fruit and vegetables, meat, fish, poultry, dairy and other goods.

Today, the program is applicable only in certain areas, including Downtown Jamaica, and the proposed zoning text amendment would expand the availability of the program's zoning incentives to South Jamaica. The FRESH program is a relatively new initiative, adopted in December 2009, but already three grocery stores in the Bronx have taken advantage of the program.

The proposed rezoning will now be reviewed by the Community Board, 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, transit-oriented development, and sustainable communities in the City, in part by initiating comprehensive, consensus-based planning and zoning changes for individual neighborhoods and business districts, as well as establishing policies and zoning regulations applicable citywide. 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, waterfront and public space.