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CITY PLANNING BEGINS PUBLIC REVIEW FOR WEST CHELSEA REZONING TO PERMIT HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AND CREATE MECHANISM FOR PRESERVING AND CREATING ACCESS TO THE HIGH LINE

Zoning Protections for Gallery District to be Retained

December 20, 2004 - The Department of City Planning (DCP) this week initiated the formal public review of its rezoning proposal for West Chelsea that would provide opportunities for new residential and commercial development on Tenth and Eleventh Avenues and facilitate the reuse of the High Line rail line as a 1.6-mile elevated park. The plan would retain manufacturing zoning on the midblocks to protect the area's many galleries. The proposed Special West Chelsea District roughly encompasses the area bounded by West 17 th and 30 th Streets between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues. The proposal, which allows the owners of land beneath and adjacent to the High Line to transfer their development rights to nearby sites, would address the concerns of landowners who had sought the High Line's demolition. In October, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and City Council Speaker Gifford Miller announced \$43.25 million in capital funding and selection of a design team for the now unused viaduct. In addition, the State joined the City in an application seeking permission to reuse the High Line as public space through the federal rail-banking program, which is expected to move forward within the next few weeks. The Highline is currently owned by CSX Transportation, Inc., which supports the proposal.

The West Chelsea plan strikes an essential balance between the need to preserve and protect this areas key assets the High Line and the gallery district while catalyzing the production of much needed housing for a variety of incomes, said City Planning Department Director Amanda M. Burden. This innovative zoning will result in a unique district that will be a legacy for the Bloomberg administration.

The plan calls for:

- Along Tenth and Eleventh Avenues, and in mid-blocks in the northern and southern portions of the district, the current zoning of M1-5, which permits light manufacturing and commercial uses, would be changed to allow residential and commercial uses at a range of densities. The areas to be rezoned are located outside of the core 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 the eastern side of Tenth Avenue.
- Manufacturing zoning 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 residential and commercial development. Developers of these sites adjacent to key sections of the High Line between West 16 th and West 19 th Streets could receive a floor area bonus in exchange for improving and providing access to the High Line.
- An estimated 4,200 units of new housing could be developed, helping to alleviate the housing shortage that persists in the City. The provision of affordable housing for a range of incomes is a key goal of the rezoning. In addition to the extension of existing mechanisms for low-income housing, including inclusionary housing and the 421a program, the Department is exploring new mechanisms to increase the amount of permanently affordable units for a wider range of incomes
- New buildings adjoining the High Line on Tenth Avenue would be governed by special urban design controls which allow the possibility of 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 much needed open space in this community, which has one of the lowest amounts of open space in the city, and is a key component of the open space network on the West Side. It will enable people to walk from the Gansevoort Meat Market through an open space network all the way up to West 42 nd Street.

The Department spent many months working with the community and making modifications to the proposal. The application now goes to Community Board 4 for review as part of the seven-month [Uniform Land Use Review Procedure](#) (ULURP).

Public review of the rezoning proposal will parallel the planning and design process for the reuse of the High Line as an elevated open space. The High Line Design Team, led by landscape and urban design firm Field Operations with architects Diller Scofidio + Renfro, is currently preparing a plan for phased public access to the High Line. Public input is an important part of the design process. Friends of the High Line has hosted two Community Input Forums with the design team this fall, on October 19 and December 2. The design team will present a framework plan for the entire High Line and a preliminary design of "Section 1", from Gansevoort to 14th Street to the public in February, 2005. Groundbreaking of Section 1 of the High Line is expected in late 2005. The High Line, which is private property, is not yet open to the public. Trespassers are subject to prosecution.

More information on the [proposal](#) is available at the Department of City Planning's website.

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.