



Special Enhanced Commercial District

Upper West Side Neighborhood Retail Streets - **Approved!**

Overview

Update June 28, 2012:

On June 28, 2012 the City Council adopted the Special Enhanced Commercial District Upper West Side Neighborhood Retail Streets Text Amendment. The zoning text changes are now in effect.  [View the adopted text amendment.](#)

Introduction

The Upper West Side's traditional retail streets offer diverse retail services to one of the most dense and vibrant residential neighborhoods in the city. The Department of City Planning (DCP) was approached by the Upper West Side community and elected officials with a list of issues that the community believed threatened the local retail landscape. Studying the Upper West Side block by block, City Planning responded to the community's concerns with a proposal that would maintain over time the general multi-store character of Amsterdam and Columbus avenues, while promoting a varied and active retail environment on Broadway which is typified by larger and 2nd story retail establishments. The proposal only applies to new or expanding establishments, and in no case does the proposal regulate overall store size or type of retail, the ownership, or method of operation of any business.

The frontage limitations described below respond to conditions on the UWS that are largely unique. By contrast with other areas of the City, the UWS has a high residential density and a limited amount of commercial space - with frontages disproportionately occupied by banks. The need to maintain retail diversity is greater due to the presence of only three commercial corridors (Broadway, Amsterdam and Columbus) that serve a large residential population. In other residentially dense neighborhoods in the City, the amount of commercial square footage per apartment is higher and there are greater opportunities for a diversity of retail that serves the area. The proposal therefore seeks to promote a diverse and vibrant retail environment by ensuring that blockfronts along Amsterdam and Columbus continue to offer multiple retail venues, and that blockfronts along all three avenues are not dominated by banks. The proposal only regulates new frontages and does not in any way affect the type or size of retail allowed on these avenues, their ownership, or method of operation. It is responsive to neighborhood-specific issues and is uniquely suited to the Upper West Side's built environment and land uses.

The Department of City Planning proposes a zoning text amendment and a zoning map amendment to establish two Special Enhanced Commercial Districts in Manhattan [Community District 7](#). The Special Districts would apply to 77 blockfronts along Amsterdam and Columbus Avenues, and 73 [blockfronts](#) along Broadway.

After a detailed analysis of the streetscape character, DCP crafted the proposed actions specifically for this area. The goals of the Upper West Side Neighborhood Retail Streets proposal are to:

- encourage diverse retail and service opportunities;
- preserve and enhance the multi store character of Amsterdam and Columbus Avenues; and
- promote an active streetscape and attractive environment for pedestrians.

The proposed Special District regulations would be applicable to [lots](#) with a frontage on the following portions of Broadway, Amsterdam and Columbus Avenues:



 [View the presentation](#) updated on June 28, 2012, reflecting City Council adoption of proposal.



 [View the training session presentation](#) - On March 18, 2013, the Department offered a training session to help users better understand the new UWS Retail zoning rules.

- Special Enhanced Commercial District – 2 includes Amsterdam Avenue bounded by 75th Street and 110th Street on the west side, excluding the blocks between 100th – 101st and 102nd-103rd streets, and bounded by 73rd and 87th streets, and 105th and 109th streets on the east side of the avenue; and
- Columbus Avenue bounded by 72nd and 87th streets.
- Special Enhanced Commercial District -3 includes Broadway bounded by 72nd Street and 110th Street on the west side, and 74th Street and 110th Street on the east side;

The proposed Special Districts would promote a vibrant mix of uses in the Upper West Side in new buildings and enlargements by limiting the frontage of most new and expanding retail and commercial establishments along Amsterdam and Columbus Avenues, and limiting the frontage of new and expanding banks and residential lobbies along Broadway, Amsterdam and Columbus Avenues. It would apply ground floor transparency requirements for new buildings to enhance the pedestrian environment.

Overall store size would not be restricted, and stores could layout with any configuration including basement, 2nd story, wrapping behind, or along corner frontages. Existing commercial spaces with frontage exceeding 40' on Amsterdam and Columbus avenues would not be affected.

This modest proposal would help maintain the existing vibrant retail character along Amsterdam and Columbus avenues by providing a framework for new establishments that builds on the strengths of these corridors, ensuring that over the long term they continue to serve the needs of Upper West Side residents.

The Department of City Planning also proposes mapping a C1-5 commercial overlay on the west side of Columbus Avenue to recognize existing commercial uses.



Locator Map

 [View a larger image.](#)

Special Enhanced Commercial District

Upper West Side Neighborhood Retail Streets - **Approved!**

Existing Context

Enhanced Commercial District

The proposal includes two Enhanced Commercial District subareas – EC-2, mapped along Amsterdam and Columbus avenues generally between 73rd and 110th streets on Amsterdam, and 73rd and 87th streets on Columbus, and EC-3, mapped along Broadway between 72nd and 110th streets.

The land use and population characteristics of the Upper West Side make this area's healthy retail balance delicate and susceptible to change. The retail balance within the proposed area is very much dependent on the built environment. Broadway, Amsterdam and Columbus supply the vast majority of commercial square footage that serve an extremely dense residential community in the surrounding streets and avenues.

Amsterdam and Columbus are characterized by buildings dating from 1900 to the 1920s with narrow lobbies and small retail spaces on the ground floor. There is a diverse mix of retail, with numerous bars and restaurants, small gift and apparel shops, and local services and offices catering to the residential population. Over the years, Broadway has attracted larger retail, commercial, and residential developments that are an appropriate fit for the corridor's wide street and higher-density zoning.

At the same time, in an area where commercial demand has historically been relatively high, a growing residential population has placed greater demand for local goods and services. Although the historical character along all three avenues remains generally intact and the area remains a strong model for commercial streets citywide, businesses entering the neighborhood today are able to assemble multiple storefronts and carve out a single, larger space along the primary commercial street. These trends have threatened the historic local retail character on Amsterdam and Columbus Avenues that has greatly contributed to the area's popularity and success. The proposed text amendment seeks to preserve the existing retail and commercial character of the Upper West Side by regulating street frontage on Amsterdam and Columbus Avenues and banks on Broadway. In addition, it would mandate a minimum amount of transparency in new buildings to ensure an active and dynamic pedestrian experience.



New mixed use residential building with two floors commercial uses on west side of Broadway between 94th and 95th streets.



Mixed use building with ground floor bank with significant frontage on east side of Columbus Avenue between 75th and 76th streets.



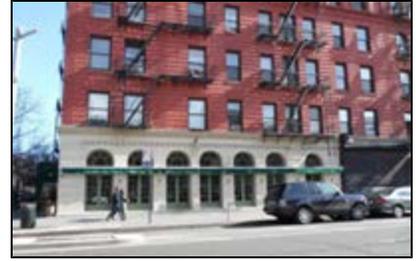
Mixed use rowhouse building with ground floor commercial on west side of Columbus Avenue between 79th and 80th streets.



Mixed use rowhouse buildings with ground floor commercial on west side of Amsterdam between 84th and 85th streets.

Commercial Overlay

The Department of City Planning is proposing mapping a C1-5 commercial overlay along 100' of the west side of Columbus Avenue from 77th and 76th street. This portion of the block is currently zoned R10A with no overlay. There are currently two retail establishments on this portion of the block – one restaurant and one clothing retailer. The uses are consistent with the ground floor uses along the rest of the block, and in the general area. The mapping of a commercial overlay recognizes the existing land use on the block and permits the application of the proposed EC-2 (Amsterdam Avenue generally between 73rd and 110th streets and Columbus Avenue generally between 72nd and 87th streets) special provisions to this half-block.



Commercial uses on the ground floor of Columbus between 76th and 77th streets where a C1-5 overlay is proposed.

Existing Zoning

The proposed EC-2 area encompasses 77 blockfronts along Amsterdam and Columbus currently zoned C2-7A, R10A, R10A/C1-5, R10A/C2-5, C1-9, C2-8, R8/C1-5, R8A/C2-5, R9/C1-5, and C1-8A. The proposed EC-3 area encompasses 73 blockfronts along Broadway currently zoned C4-6A, R9A/C1-5, and C2-8A.

The blocks zoned R9A/C1-5 and C2-8A along Broadway between 97th street and 110th street were rezoned in 2007 as part of the Department's Upper West Side contextual rezoning (C 070427 ZMM).

The blocks along Amsterdam and Columbus to which the proposed EC-2 would be applied are currently zoned R8/C1-5, R8A/C1-5, R8A/C2-5, R9/C1-5, R10A, R10A/C1-5, R10A/C2-5, C1-8A, C1-9, C2-7A and C2-8. The blocks along Broadway to which the proposed EC-3 would be applied are currently zoned R9A/C1-5, C2-8A and C4-6A.

The Department of City Planning also proposes mapping a C1-5 commercial overlay on the west side of Columbus Avenue to the middle of the block between 77th and 76th streets, to a length of 100' from 77th and to a depth of 100'. The area is currently zoned R10A with no overlay. The R10A would remain unchanged.



Existing Zoning Map

 [View a larger image.](#)

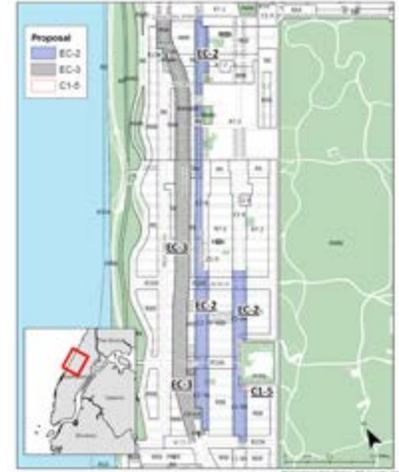
Special Enhanced Commercial District Upper West Side Neighborhood Retail Streets - **Approved!** Proposed Zoning

Proposed Zoning

The proposed zoning map amendment would create the Special Enhanced Commercial District – 2 along Amsterdam Avenue generally between 73rd and 110th streets, and Columbus Avenue between 72nd and 87th streets, and the Special Enhanced Commercial District – 3 along Broadway between 72nd and 110th streets, would provide regulations pertaining to ground floor street frontage and transparency requirements. The proposed area to which the Special Enhanced Commercial Districts text would apply encompasses 77 blockfronts along Amsterdam and Columbus and 73 blockfronts along Broadway and in Manhattan CD7.

The proposed special district would be guided by the following goals:

- encourage diverse retail and service opportunities;
- preserve and enhance the multi-store character of Amsterdam and Columbus Avenues; and
- promote an active streetscape and attractive environment for pedestrians.



Proposed Zoning Map
[View a larger image.](#)

Special Use Provisions

- Ground floor frontage restrictions for new and expanding banks and residential lobbies
- Ground floor frontage restrictions for other new and expanding [commercial uses](#) along Amsterdam and Columbus
- Transparency/glazing requirements for new developments
- Minimum number of stores per block requirement on Amsterdam and Columbus Avenues for new development.

Each of the major components to this text amendment seeks to address a specific issue and will result in the strengthening of this established, dynamic commercial neighborhood.

The proposed Special Enhanced Commercial Districts text amendment would be shown on the zoning map by mapping a Special District, denoted "EC" for Enhanced Commercial.

Exceptions to the Special Use Provisions:

Buildings whose commercial depth is less than 30' would be exempt from any frontage limitations. Additionally, schools, houses of worship and pre-existing lots of less than 20' frontage would be exempted from the ground floor use and streetscape design/transparency regulations. Grocery stores would also be exempt.

Additionally, a Chair [Certification](#) will allow for existing businesses to apply for expanded frontages up to 60', and a City Planning Commission [Authorization](#) will allow for a discretionary waiver of frontage maximums.

Frontage Regulations:

Along Amsterdam and Columbus (EC-2):

A minimum of two non-residential establishments shall be required for every 50 feet of street frontage for all zoning lots with a lot width of 50 feet or more, as measured along the street line of Amsterdam or Columbus Avenue for new developments.

All new and expanding commercial establishments other than banks or loan offices shall not exceed 40' in width along Amsterdam and Columbus Avenues except for grocery stores and houses of worship.



[View a larger image.](#)

Each new ground floor establishment required along Amsterdam and Columbus must have a depth equal to at least 30 feet, as measured from the street wall along the designated commercial street.

New and expanding banks and loan offices shall not exceed 25' in width.

All new and expanding lobbies for upper floors shall not exceed 25' in width along Amsterdam and Columbus.

Along Broadway (EC-3):

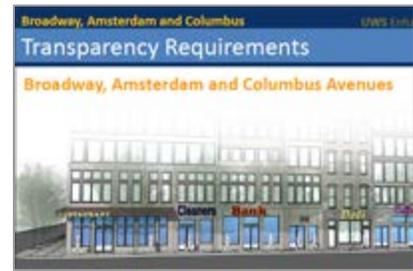
New and expanding banks and loan offices shall not exceed 25' in width at street level. All lobbies for upper floor uses shall not exceed 25' in width at street level. There are no restrictions on banks' expansion above or below street level.



[View a larger image.](#)

Transparency Regulations

Transparency/glazing is required for 50% of the area of new developments between a height of 2' and 12' as measured above the sidewalk level for all uses fronting on Broadway (EC-3), and Amsterdam and Columbus (EC-2) (including lobbies) in new buildings. No portion of a ground floor may have a blank wall with a width exceeding 10'.



[View a larger image.](#)

Commercial Overlay

The Department of City Planning is proposing mapping a C1-5 commercial overlay along 100' of the west side of Columbus Avenue from 77th and 76th street. This portion of the block is currently zoned R10A with no overlay. There are currently two retail establishments on this portion of the block – one restaurant and one clothing retailer. The uses are consistent with the ground floor uses along the rest of the block, and in the general area. The mapping of a commercial overlay recognizes the existing land use on the block and permits the application of the proposed EC-2 special provisions along to Amsterdam and Columbus to this half-block.



[View a larger image.](#)



Existing commercial uses on corner of Columbus and 77th Street, where C1-5 overlay is proposed.

Special Enhanced Commercial District Upper West Side Neighborhood Retail Streets - **Approved!** Public Review

The Upper West Side Neighborhood Retail Streets proposal began formal public review on January 3, 2012 with the Department of City Planning's certification of the [Uniform Land Use Review \(ULURP\)](#) application (120145 ZMM) and the [City Planning Commission's](#) referral of the associated zoning text amendment (120144 ZRM) to Manhattan Community Board 7.

<i>Milestones</i>	<i>Target Dates</i>
Department of City Planning certification	January 3, 2012
Community Board 7 Approval	March 6, 2012
Manhattan Borough President Approval	April 4, 2012
City Planning Commission Hearing	April 11, 2012
City Planning Commission Approval (with modifications*) (Read the CPC Reports.)	May 9, 2012
City Council Approval	June 28, 2012 - view the presentation

***City Planning Commission Modifications**

On May 9, 2012 the City Planning Commission (CPC) approved the zoning text amendment (N 120145 ZRM) with modifications in response to testimony at its public hearing. The modifications include: a certification process that would allow existing businesses to apply for an expanded frontage up to 60'; grandfathering of store frontages so that they could remain permanently at their current sizes; regulations that would allow projects due to complete expansions within 6 months to continue unaffected by the new rules; residential lobby frontages permitted up to 25' along Amsterdam and Columbus avenues to provide additional flexibility and; other changes including the addition of a community board referral for waivers, the removal of the Chair Certification for landmarked buildings and buildings in historic districts, and miscellaneous clarifications. The zoning map amendment (C 120145 ZMM) was approved without modification.

Related Notes

-  Items accompanied by this symbol require the [free Adobe Acrobat Reader](#).
- Brief explanations of terms in *green italics* can be viewed by [visiting glossary page](#). Words and phrases followed by an asterisk (*) are defined terms in the Zoning Resolution, primarily in Section 12-10. Consult the Zoning Resolution for the official and legally binding definitions of these words and phrases.