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****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

April 30, 2008

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Release # 033-2008

COUNCIL VOTES ON RIVER TO RIVER REZONING PLAN FOR HARLEM'S 125TH STREET

City Hall, April 30, 2008 – Following a lengthy and collaborative public review and hearing process, the members of the City Council will vote on an extensive rezoning plan for the 125th Street Corridor in Harlem.

The Council will also vote on legislation that would:

- Preserve existing character and greenery in New York City neighborhoods by prohibiting homeowners from completely paving over front yards, which is commonly done to create off-street parking;
- Require commonly shared sewer lines that link to large developments to be placed beyond the footprint of the residential structure; and
- Officially create the Mayor's Office of Long Term Planning and Sustainability.

125TH STREET RIVER TO RIVER REZONING

Following a lengthy public review process, the Council will vote on a historic rezoning of 125th Street. The *River to River* Plan will preserve the community's unique character while providing new economic opportunities for area residents and businesses. The agreement includes an unprecedented 48% affordable housing component, with ownership opportunities for those making 50% of AMI.

In recognition of the need to preserve the rich cultural tradition that has made Harlem an iconic neighborhood around the world and an integral part of African-American heritage, for the first time in the City's history a land-use item will include an "Arts Bonus." The bonuses provide space for local arts groups who would not otherwise be able to locate on 125th Street. They require that a given space is permanently devoted to arts use and provide long-term stability to groups by offering 15-year contracts, with two 5 years renewals. A local arts advisory board, a majority of whose members are appointed by the local Council Member, will certify the groups.

Additionally, the plan implements protections for small business so that local businesses can remain in the neighborhood. The protections include the establishment of a Harlem Business Assistance Fund, the creation of a forgivable loan program and the start of a market assistance program that would go door-to-door spread awareness. The plan also allocates capital improvements at Marcus Garvey Park, building upon one of New York City's premier parks. The funding will be set aside for improvements to the Amphitheater, the Park House and the Pelham Fritz Recreation Center.

"Economic development is good for New York City, but we must be careful that it does not come at the expense of our neighborhoods," said **Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn**. "The new 125th Street rezoning plan is proof that a positive balance can be achieved. Using input from the community, we put together a plan that generates new jobs, helps small businesses and creates affordable housing, and does so in a way that protects the character of this treasured city neighborhood."

“I am about community and I most certainly treasure my beloved Harlem where I was born, raised. Harlem is my home,” said **Council member Inez E. Dickens**. “The modifications to the 125th Street rezoning plan will protect the historic and cultural character of Harlem. Most importantly, it will also protect its residents and their families from being forced out of Harlem due to over-development and gentrification. My priority is to make sure that those who have laid down roots in Harlem both in business and as long time Harlem residents and who have stayed in Harlem in good times and bad would not be displaced. During the long negotiation process, I took my direction from my Community Boards, notably Board 10 and also Boards 9 and 11. I am most pleased that we were able to create an unprecedented amount of affordable and income targeted housing opportunities that will hopefully serve as a blueprint for other working class communities.”

“I would like to congratulate Council Members Dickens, Jackson and Viverito as well as their respective Community Boards for their tireless efforts to bring us to this day,” said **Land Use Committee Chair Melinda Katz**. “This rezoning has evolved throughout the process, for the better, because the community was involved and the Council recognized how vitally important these modifications were to everyone.”

“The new 125th Street rezoning plan is a testament to the strength of the communities in Harlem and Upper Manhattan,” said **Council member Robert Jackson**. “Using input from hundreds of concerned residents and advocates, we’ve been able to craft a plan that will protect the unique character of our neighborhoods while building thousands of new units of affordable housing, creating new jobs, and providing critical support for local small businesses and arts programs.”

“The modifications made to the 125th Street Rezoning and the benefits agreed upon, come after extensive negotiations that incorporated the surrounding community's concerns,” said **Council member Melissa Mark-Viverito**. This modified plan allows the revitalization of Harlem and yet still allows for the preservation of its rich history. I want to thank everyone involved for working so diligently to come to an agreement that will serve our constituents for many years to come.

GREEN YARDS ZONING CHANGE

Promoting greener streetscapes across the five boroughs, the Council will vote on a zoning resolution amendment that would prohibit property owners from completely paving their front yards. Due to a lack of on-street parking, many homeowners in Brooklyn and Queens communities have paved over their yards, diverting rainwater into the City's overburdened sewer system, preventing it from being absorbed into the ground. This rule will require homeowners to keep 20% to 50% of their front yards covered with greenery. Existing homes with concrete yards will not be affected by this change. Currently, there are no regulations limiting the amount of pavement in the front of a residence.

“As Chair of the Land Use Committee I am proud that we are voting to approve amendments to the Zoning Resolution proposed by The Department of City Planning, to regulate yards for residential developments,” said **Land Use Committee Chair Melinda Katz**. “The approved text goes along way to guarantee that our neighborhoods will be greener and our air will be cleaner.”

COMMON SEWER IMPROVEMENTS

To better protect and more efficiently repair commonly shared sewers that link to large residential developments, the Council will vote to require that common sewers be placed outside of the footprint of the property to which it connects. Currently, many common sewers are located deep under the structures of large-scale residential developments and are very difficult to repair and replace. This legislation would alleviate problems of obstruction attributed to repairing common sewers.

“For over a decade many homeowners have experienced serious quality of life and financial distress as a result of common sewer failures and back-ups at single, two and three family home developments,” said Council

member Maria del Carmen Arroyo, lead sponsor of the bill. “In addressing the many concerns that have resulted in developments where common sewers have failed, we discovered that the City's building code is silent regarding how common sewers are to be installed. This bill will amend the building code and add specifications that limit how these types of sewer systems must be constructed. This legislation will help ensure that families embarking on the American dream of purchasing a new home, do not experience the many concerns that have resulted in developments where common sewers have failed.”

OFFICE OF LONG TERM PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY

The Council will vote to formally establish the Mayor’s Office of Long Term Planning and Sustainability. Established by the Mayor as part of his 2030 plan, the Office of Long Term Planning and Sustainability is essential to the coordination and implementation of PlaNYC and other sustainability initiatives across the five boroughs. The proposed legislation will officially recognize and establish the priorities and purpose of this Mayoral office. Furthermore, it requires the Director of the Office to develop programs, policies and actions to further long term planning and sustainability in New York City and authorizes the director to undertake activities to increase public awareness and education regarding sustainability and sustainable practices in New York City.

James F. Gennaro, Chair of the Environmental Protection Committee and sponsor of the bill said, “This legislation will ensure that the Office of Long Term Planning and Sustainability will serve the people of New York City for generations to come.”

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