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# NORWOOD NEWS

PUBLISHED BY MOSHOLU PRESERVATION CORPORATION

Vol. 20, No. 7

April 5 - 18, 2007

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## City To Help With CB7 Zoning Study

By ANNIE SHREFFLER

In an ongoing effort to improve living conditions in this growing part of the northwest Bronx, Community Board 7 decided at its February meeting to authorize the city's Department of Planning to work with them on the rezoning process referred to as 197C in the city's Charter.

Now, members of the Long Term Planning and Land Use committees are looking at problem spots in the district and are considering new development proposals.

With the help of City Planning, individual areas can be addressed with rezoning, usually within a year. The 197C process eliminates the daunting costs of development consultants and the delays caused by long reviews of the entire district, according to Rita Kessler, CB7's district manager.

One of the areas to examine will be the district's eastern riverfront. The Long Term Planning Committee reported at the March community board meeting that it hopes to work cooperatively with Community Boards 4 and 5, as well as a Harlem River task force, to develop the waterfront. Members of the community are already involved in a river cleanup effort and would like to see the area rezoned for more public access and green space.

Board member Paul Foster said another area under review is a residential section near Montefiore Medical Center. Because the large institution has converted so many private homes to office space, residents feel the neighborhood is left vulnerable and unoccupied after business hours, creating a kind of dead zone.

As a creative way to prevent dead zones or unwanted commercial changes from occurring on Mosholu Parkway, the community board is also considering one resident's suggestion to apply for the parkway's designation as a Community Preservation Area. This change would protect current building facades, beautify the parkway and help some older buildings obtain

landmark status.

With the ability to make zoning changes using the 197C process, the community board can also prevent unwanted development. Rezoning may be able to stop the construction of larger buildings, curbing the rise in population density and strains on already busy transportation and sanitation systems.

One new development under consideration is an application for a variance by the Doe Fund to build two eight-story, single-room occupancy buildings on Webster Avenue. The Land Use Committee debated the pros and cons of supporting the application at their last meeting.

While no one relished the idea of building 84 units to house men just released from prison, committee members recognized the importance of the reintegration process run by the reputable Doe Fund. The committee decided to invite Doe Fund representatives back (only their attorney came to the initial meeting), and ask them to compromise by creating two-bedroom housing units as well, which would allow people rebuilding their lives to establish roots, raise families and truly live in the community.

CB7 Chairperson Gregory Faulkner feels positive about working with City Planning, saying this partnership in the 197C process will accomplish many of the same changes as a larger redevelopment plan would, but sooner.

“The planning office gives tremendous support, doing a lot of the legwork [on re-zoning initiatives] and walking us through the technical aspects of each project,” he said. “We’re not restricted to one area, but Webster Avenue is a priority.”

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