

**Statement for the New York City Planning Commission Hearing
on the 125th Street Rezoning**

by

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Good morning. My name is Nicolas Ronderos and I'm a Senior Planner for Regional Plan Association, a private, nonprofit research and planning organization serving the greater New York metropolitan region.

As with any action of this scale, the 125th Street rezoning will impact the lives of residents and businesses both within and surrounding the rezoning area, and interact with development pressures that will transform it in the coming years. 125th Street boasts a unique character and many distinct assets that this action will need to enhance. It offers a multitude of cultural, commercial and institutional resources, many of which have historic importance for the Harlem community.

Regional Plan Association supports the proposed action, and wishes to suggest enhancements that would help insure that benefits are fully shared by the surrounding community. The rezoning would enhance the corridor through a balanced strategy which provides new opportunities to catalyze future mixed-use commercial and residential development, including affordable housing and arts and entertainment space. The proposed densities and uses are appropriate for a thriving central business district served by multiple subway, commuter rail and bus lines.

The 125th Street Plan will enable Harlem to fulfill its potential as a leading business and residential district in the City. Given the change that this will bring to existing firms and organizations, we suggest that the Arts Bonus and Arts/Entertainment Requirement be modified to support local institutions and businesses by including a local preference to organizations from Harlem. The rezoning and enhancements will encourage a diverse mix of businesses, including arts and entertainment, expand career opportunities for Harlem residents, and sustain and enhance the revitalization of 125th Street as a unique Manhattan Main Street.

We also hope that the Commission's hearing will facilitate continued dialogue to reach the best outcome for the community, Upper Manhattan and the City. Community Boards 9, 10 and 11 and the Manhattan Borough President have expressed ideas for enhancing and reinforcing the existing larger Harlem community. These are legitimate concerns and deserve further consideration by the Commission and the City Council. Of special interest are the proposals for a Harlem-wide development strategy by the Borough President's Office and community based business incentives and income targeted housing by the Community Boards.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify at this public hearing.
