



Port Morris/Bruckner Boulevard Rezoning - Approved!

Overview

Background

Port Morris is a mixed use (light industrial, commercial and residential) neighborhood located across from Manhattan between the Harlem/East Rivers and the Major Deegan Expressway. In 1997, the City Planning Commission (CPC) established the city's first mixed-use district, known as the Port Morris Special Mixed Use District, in a five-block area along Bruckner Boulevard in Bronx Community District 1. The new zoning was a catalyst for strengthening the area's emerging antique businesses and for revitalizing the upper floors of buildings. The success to date of that rezoning is evident in the number of residential units reactivated, renovated or converted and the new ground floor retail and exhibit spaces created.



Study Area

[View a larger image.](#)

The Department of City Planning (DCP) is now proposing to extend the Port Morris mixed use district to eleven surrounding blocks. The area to be rezoned is generally bounded by Park Avenue to the west, Willow Avenue to the east, East 134th Street to the north and the Harlem River/Harlem River Yards to the south. The existing manufacturing zoning on these blocks permits only industrial and commercial uses. The proposed mixed use zoning district would also allow for residential use and community facilities.

The area surrounding the existing Special Mixed Use District lends itself to an increase in residential and commercial activity. More than one-third of the lots in the study area are vacant or underutilized, and warehouse space is already being converted into lofts for non-industrial commercial uses. Mixed use zoning would continue to allow existing light manufacturing uses as well as new ones. And, by permitting use of vacant buildings for residential and commercial use in an area so close to Manhattan, the proposed zoning would help transform Port Morris into a true gateway to the Bronx.

Objectives

The proposed zoning would:

- **Build on the success of the 1997 rezoning**

As a result of the special district established in 1997, approximately 42 rowhouses have been rehabilitated, 36 new residential units have been created or reactivated on upper floors of buildings, 50 lofts in the former Estey Piano Factory have already been converted and 100 more are expected by the end of 2004, and new ground floor retail and exhibit spaces have opened.

- **Reflect the current mixed-use character of the area**

The area has historically been a mixed use neighborhood with residential, commercial, and light industrial uses, and that trend has continued as manufacturing left the area.

- **Bring new uses to underutilized land and buildings**

Many of the lots in the study area that are vacant or underutilized (as parking lots or open storage facilities) and the buildings that are partially or entirely vacant have remained so for decades, due in part to the mismatch between market demand and the limited land uses permitted under the existing zoning.

- **Enable existing residences to become conforming uses**

Approximately one-third (44) of the 129 lots in the proposed rezoning area are occupied by residential buildings, which do not conform with existing zoning. Non-conformance can make it difficult to obtain home improvement loans, and any residence left vacant for two years or more cannot return to residential use. The proposed zoning would eliminate this non-conformance and enable vacant units to be reactivated.

- **Further the city's housing initiative**

Mixed-use zoning would allow residential uses to be developed as-of-right and encourage underutilized sites to be developed more productively, helping to achieve the city's goal of increased housing production.

- **Focus on improved waterfront access**

Although the Harlem River runs along the western edge of the rezoning area, the waterfront is inaccessible to nearby residents. New residential and mixed use development on the waterfront can open up the waterfront and, in a separate study, DCP is examining options for waterfront access and improved connections to the upland community.


- **Create a vibrant 24/7 neighborhood**



Former Industrial Building Recently Converted for Non-Industrial Uses

With added residents, workers and the shops and services to support them, streets would become livelier and the sense of community would grow in Port Morris.

Public Review

On October 4, 2004, the Department of City Planning certified the [Uniform Land Use Review Procedure](#) (ULURP) application for the Port Morris/Bruckner Boulevard rezoning to begin the formal public review process. On October 28, 2004 Community Board 1 approved the application. On November 12, 2004, the Bronx Borough President issued a recommendation in favor of the rezoning. The City Planning Commission held public hearings on the application on December 8, 2004 and on January 19, 2005. On January 31, 2005 the City Planning Commission voted unanimously to approve the rezoning and referred it to the City Council to vote on the proposal. ( [Read the CPC Report](#)). On March 9, 2005 the City Council adopted the zoning changes which are now in effect.

For more information on the Port Morris/Bruckner Boulevard Rezoning, please contact the Bronx Office of the Department of City Planning at (718) 220-8500.

Port Morris/Bruckner Boulevard Rezoning - **Approved!** Neighborhood Character and Land Use

Port Morris was first developed in the 19th century by Gouverneur Morris II, who envisioned a commercial seaport that would rival the seaports of Manhattan. While this ambitious seaport plan never came to pass, Port Morris did grow as a manufacturing and warehousing district, including furniture and piano manufacturing. Growth in the area occurred around the turn of the 20th century with the addition of rail connections and new bridges to Manhattan. The Third Avenue Bridge was built in 1898, followed by the Willis Avenue Bridge three years later. In 1906, the Harlem River Train Yards were constructed on the southern edge of Port Morris. The industrial strength of the area came to an abrupt halt during the Great Depression, and in the following two decades little construction occurred. In the 1950s, a substantial portion of the housing in the area was cleared to make way for the Triborough Bridge and the Bruckner and Major Deegan Expressways. Since then, industrial uses have gradually left the area.

Renovation of former industrial buildings for non-manufacturing uses has been occurring in the area over the past decade. Retail shops specializing in antiques emerged along Bruckner Boulevard, creating a new South Bronx "Antique Row". In 1997, the City Planning Commission (CPC) established the Port Morris Special Mixed Use District, which facilitated the creation and renovation of approximately 185 new residential units. New street furniture, trees, and lamps have improved the pedestrian environment along Bruckner Boulevard, contributing to the "look and feel" of a neighborhood.



Occupied and vacant residential buildings.



Recent renovations of buildings for non-industrial uses

Port Morris is truly a mixed use neighborhood, as illustrated in the chart and land use map below. Industrial uses, including light manufacturing, warehousing, and open storage, are found on 38 (29%) of the 129 lots in the rezoning area. Another eight (6%) of the total lots contain commercial uses alone and self-storage facilities. (Office and retail establishments are often found on lots with industrial and residential uses and are included in those numbers.) Light industrial and commercial uses are dispersed across the rezoning area, primarily along Bruckner Boulevard. Many of the industrial and commercial uses are in large brick and concrete industrial buildings ranging from one to six stories in height. The open storage facilities are generally used by adjacent industrial uses.

Residential uses are found on 44 (34%) of the lots, primarily at the far eastern end of the study area. These are comprised mainly of two- and three-story row houses along East 133rd and East 134th Streets near Willow Avenue, and farther west along Bruckner Boulevard, a variety of three- to five-story multifamily homes. The taller apartment buildings tend to have commercial retail space on the ground floor, including delicatessens and stores specializing in auto parts.

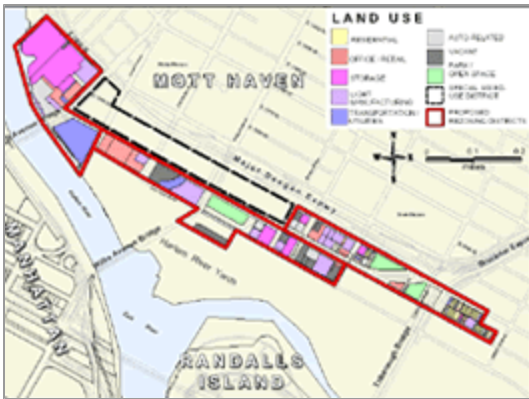
Transportation and utility uses are found on 13 (10%) of the lots and are mostly gas stations and auto repair garages. Other transportation-related uses service the nearby bridges. Parking facilities, on eight (6%) of the lots, are mostly accessory parking for adjacent industrial uses. Vacant buildings and lots are dotted throughout the study area on 15 different lots, some of which consist of boarded up residential and industrial buildings that are in a state of disrepair. Some of the vacant lots are used as parking lots. The two open space resources (on three lots) in the rezoning area are Pulaski Park on



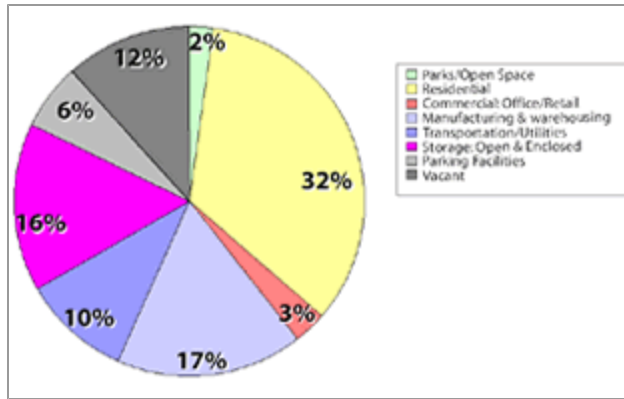
Bruckner Boulevard and East 134th Street Playground at Bruckner Boulevard and Cypress Avenue.

One-third of all lots remain vacant or underutilized under Existing Zoning.

STUDY AREA LAND USE



[View a larger image.](#)



NOTE: Percentages based on number of lots

[View a larger image.](#)

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Existing and Proposed Zoning

Existing Zoning

The rezoning area is currently zoned M2-1 west of Lincoln Avenue, mostly M1-2 east of Lincoln Avenue, and M3-1 on a small portion of the rezoning area south of Pulaski Park, adjacent to the Willis Avenue Bridge. In addition, there are three lots between Alexander Place and Cypress Avenue within the rezoning area, two of which consist of park land and one which consists of the access ramp to the Triborough Bridge, that are currently zoned R6. These three lots will not be affected by the proposed rezoning due to their park and highway designations. All these zoning designations have been in place since the New York City Zoning Resolution was adopted in 1961.



Existing Zoning

 [View a larger image.](#)

M1-2

Most of the rezoning area is zoned M1-2, a light manufacturing district that often acts as a buffer between heavy manufacturing districts and residential or commercial districts. The M1-2 zoning district has a maximum *floor area ratio* (FAR) of 2.0 for manufacturing and commercial uses. The parking requirement varies by use. Manufacturing uses in M1 districts must adhere to strict performance standards.

M2-1

The portion of the rezoning area west of Lincoln Avenue is zoned M2-1, a district that occupies the middle ground between zoning for light and heavy industrial uses. The district permits the same types of industrial uses as those in M1 districts, but performance standards are lower and community facilities are not permitted. Like the M1 district, the maximum FAR is 2.0. The parking requirement also varies by use.

M3-1

A small portion of the study area south of 132nd Street is zoned M3-1. M3 districts are for heavy industries which often can generate noise, traffic and pollutants. The M3-1 district also has parking requirements that vary by use, a maximum FAR of 2.0 and a maximum front wall height of 60 feet or four stories. This district has the lowest performance standards of all manufacturing districts.

Proposed Zoning

DCP is proposing to extend the Special Mixed Use District (MX-1) to all or part of eleven blocks currently zoned M1-2 and M2-1 and to one lot zoned M1-3 and three lots zoned R6. Three different zoning designations with paired residential and manufacturing districts would be applied within the extended special district. The proposed zoning changes are as follows:



Proposed Zoning

 [View a larger image.](#)

M1-2 & R6 to M1-2/R6A (MX-1)

This four block area would be an expansion of the existing Special Mixed Use District to the east, generally bounded by East 134th Street, Brown Place, Bruckner Boulevard, and Willow Avenue. Within this area between Alexander Place and Cypress Avenue, two lots that comprise a designated City Park and one lot that comprises the access ramp to the Triborough Bridge are zoned R6.

The proposed M1-2/R6A (MX-1) permits light manufacturing uses and would allow new residential uses and a wider variety of community facilities. The proposed district has a commercial and manufacturing FAR of 2.0, the same as the existing M1-2 district. The R6A is a contextual district with a residential and community facility FAR of 3.0. The maximum building height for residential buildings would be 70 feet. The residential parking requirement would be 50 percent (one off-street space for every two units) and commercial and manufacturing parking requirements would vary with use.

M2-1 to M1-3/R8 (MX-1)

One block directly west and one block south of the existing Special Mixed Use District, generally bounded by 134th Street to the north, Park Avenue to the west, Lincoln Avenue to the east, and the Harlem River to the south, are proposed to be designated M1-3/R8(MX-1). These two blocks, at the water's edge bordering the Third Avenue Bridge entry ramps, have larger lot sizes than the rest of the study area and can support taller and denser development.

The proposed M1-3/R8 (MX-1) has a maximum commercial and manufacturing FAR of 5.0, a maximum residential FAR of 6.02, and a community facility FAR of 6.5. Residential building heights are regulated by the sky exposure plane regulations. The parking requirement would be 40 percent for residential and would vary by use for commercial and manufacturing businesses.

The industrial uses in the proposed M1-3/R8 (MX-1) would have higher performance standards than those permitted in the existing M2-1 district.

M1-2 and M3-1 to M1-5/R8A (MX-1)

Five consecutive blocks south of the existing Special Mixed Use District and zoned M1-1, generally bounded by Bruckner Boulevard to the north, Lincoln Avenue to the west, St. Ann's Avenue to the east, and 132nd Street to the south, are proposed to be designated M1-5/R8A(MX-1). One lot south of 132nd Street on Willis Avenue, zoned M3-1 and surrounded by the Harlem River Yards, is also proposed to be part of the M1-5/R8A (MX-1) district. This lot consists of a three story, well-preserved vacant building, formerly the New Haven Passenger Rail Station, which was also once used for offices and light manufacturing, never housed heavy industrial uses.

The proposed M1-5/R8A (MX-1) has a maximum commercial and manufacturing FAR of 5.0, a maximum residential FAR of 6.02, and a community facility FAR of 6.5. The R8A is a *contextual zoning* with a maximum building height of 120 feet as well as street wall and setback regulations that would respect the existing Special Mixed Use District across Bruckner Boulevard and enhance the pedestrian environment along this corridor. The residential parking requirements would be 40 percent of dwelling units and there would be no parking requirement for manufacturing or commercial uses.


All existing uses in the proposed M1-5/R8A (MX-1) district would remain conforming, including warehouses, offices, retail establishments, construction-related businesses, and certain community facilities. New residential uses would also be allowed. While little housing currently exists on these blocks, there is potential for upper floor apartments and loft conversions in a number of the currently vacant and underutilized buildings.

Taken together, the proposed zoning changes would strengthen the entrepreneurial spirit of this older industrial neighborhood by providing opportunities for live/work space for artists, inventors, craftsman and small businesses, and for adaptive reuse of significant buildings. The new zoning would expand opportunities for both smaller, light industrial uses and for much needed housing -- together with the retail and other services to support that industry and housing.

SUMMARY OF EXISTING AND PROPOSED ZONING

Zoning	M1-2	M2-1	M3-1	M1-2/R6A/MX-1	M1-3/R8/MX-1	M1-5/R8A/MX-1
Commercial/ Manufacturing FAR	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	5.0	5.0
Residential FAR	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.0	6.02	6.02 (7.2 QH)
Use Groups	4-14, 16,17	6-14, 16-17	6-14, 16-18	1-14, 16-17	1-14,16-17	1-14,16-17
Max Residential Building Height	N/A	N/A	N/A	70	N/A	120

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.