

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Alex Lyda at (212) 854-5276 or mal2133@columbia.edu

Former Mayor Dinkins Says Columbia's Plan for Old Manhattanville Manufacturing Zone Will Benefit West Harlem

New York, June 1, 2007—Writing in a May 27 op-ed for the *New York Times*, former Mayor David Dinkins, now a veteran Columbia University professor of public policy, has endorsed a plan for long-term growth in the old Manhattanville manufacturing zone of West Harlem.

“I have studied the University’s proposal for long-term growth in the old Manhattanville manufacturing zone of West Harlem, developed under the leadership of President Lee Bollinger, and believe that it can and will be a good thing for both the University and its Harlem neighbors,” Dinkins said. “In my dozen years on faculty at Columbia, I have seen first-hand how essential it is to the city’s future and that of our neighbors that we have a great urban university as a partner in meeting that challenge.”

After leaving office in 1994, Dinkins became a professor of public affairs at Columbia, where he teaches courses on urban policy. In addition to teaching his courses, Dinkins has been actively involved in university activities and is much in demand as a participant in faculty- and student-sponsored events. For each of the past 11 years, he has hosted the David N. Dinkins Public Policy Forum at Columbia’s School of International and Public Affairs, bringing together educators, government officials and community leaders to discuss the challenges facing today’s cities. This year’s forum will focus on urban poverty, and will be held on April 16.

Citing “expanded local job and entrepreneurial opportunities for the diverse group of people who live in upper Manhattan neighborhoods,” Dinkins says he supports Columbia’s approach to the proposed expansion in an area that has resisted prior plans for revitalization, including some undertaken while he was in City Hall. He points out that the University is a vital economic engine in the community at a time when many other employers are moving middle-income jobs out of New York. He also says that the proposed expansion is designed in a way that makes it a resource for the surrounding community.

“Columbia’s Manhattanville proposal creates a new kind of open, urban campus that will improve local streets and bring commercial life back to Broadway, 125th Street and 12th Avenue,” Dinkins said. “[The plan will] better connect the residential areas of Harlem with the new waterfront park now under construction along the Hudson River.”

Dinkins also pointed out that the University had come a long way since the 1960s by forging partnerships that benefit the surrounding community. “I was, some may recall, one of those picketing Columbia back in the 1960s, so I know the history and appreciate the concerns that some Harlem residents may have about the University.” Dinkins said. “But we should give each

other credit where credit is due, and not lose sight of the ways in which the partnership has benefited the partners—the many public health and human service programs, the educational and cultural exchanges, the workplace experiences and opportunities.”

Some examples Dinkins cites include Columbia’s Mailman School of Public Health, with its wide array of local public health clinics, outreach programs and research studies. The Mailman School has also joined with the Columbia-affiliated Harlem Hospital Center and the Harlem Children’s Zone to tackle the problem of asthma among overweight children in the community.

Mayor Dinkins has helped support Columbia University Medical Center’s Summer Research Fellowships to minority students from The City University of New York, a program that enables local students to participate in cutting-edge research in Columbia’s medical labs, mentored by leading scientists at the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

He also pointed out that, for more than four decades, Columbia’s Double Discovery Center has provided on-campus after-school enrichment and college readiness programs to hundreds of local students from low-income families. Double Discovery participants have consistently achieved high school graduation rates and college attendance rates of over 90 percent.

This 17-acre area of Upper Manhattan, where Columbia seeks to establish an open center for academic, economic and civic life, is just north of Columbia’s historic Morningside Heights campus and consists primarily of the four large blocks from 129th to 133rd streets between Broadway and 12th Avenue, including the north side of 125th Street. The center would also include three properties on the east side of Broadway from 131st to 134th streets.

Columbia projects that the expansion in Manhattanville will create 6,000 new university jobs, as well as an average of 1,200 construction jobs per year for the next 25 years. The university already has a strong record of hiring community residents with a wide range of skills and experience in the workforce, as well as of utilizing minority-, women- and locally owned contractors. For example, in 2006, Columbia contracted for more than \$65 million in construction, repair and maintenance services with minority-, women-, or locally owned firms, representing more than one-third of university spending on these services.

“Local residents in upper Manhattan already comprise nearly a third of the University’s staff and administration,” Dinkins said. “And Columbia University could have no better partners in this venture than the people of Harlem.”