

# Queens Borough President Recommendation

APPLICATION: ULURP #200238 PCQ

COMMUNITY BOARD: Q01

DOCKET DESCRIPTION

IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by the Department of Sanitation (DSNY) and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS), pursuant to Section 197-c of the New York City Charter, for site selection and acquisition of property, for construction of a sanitation garage and salt shed facility, located at 31-11 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue (Block 850, p/o Lot 350) and 35-00 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue (Block 826, Lot 42), Zoning Map Nos. 6D & 9C, Astoria, Borough of Queens, Community District 1.

PUBLIC HEARING

A Public Hearing was held at Queens Borough Hall, 120-55 Queens Boulevard in the Borough President’s Conference Room on Thursday, March 12, 2020 at 10:30 A.M. pursuant to Section 82(5) of the New York City Charter and was duly advertised in the manner specified in Section 197-c (i) of the New York City Charter. The applicant made a presentation. There were no other speakers. The hearing was closed.

CONSIDERATION

Subsequent to a review of the application and consideration of testimony received at the public hearing, the following issues and impacts have been identified:

- The Department of Sanitation (DSNY) and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) filed this application for site selection and acquisition of a privately-owned property adjacent to Luyster Creek in Astoria, as well as easements for vehicular and utility access, for the purposes of constructing a new sanitation garage and salt shed that would relocate and consolidate the operations of separate existing facilities servicing Queens Community District 1 (CD1) and a portion of Community District 2 (CD2);
- The proposed CD1 Garage and Salt Shed would be located at 31-11 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue next to Luyster Creek, also known as “Steinway Creek”, within the Astoria Industrial Business Zone (IBZ). The new one-story 93,775 GSF garage would be used to store large weather-sensitive vehicles (mechanical brooms, salt spreaders, etc.) as well as other vehicles, repair bays, and a wash bay. A three-story, 31,500 SF portion of the building would house the personnel section with locker rooms, lavatories, and offices for DSNY staff use. Collection trucks, service/sedans/SUVs, and salt plow attachments will be stored outdoors along with accessory parking for employees. There would be a total of 103 vehicles and 145 personnel located on the new site. The garage would operate 24/7 with reduced operations on Sundays. The scheduled shifts are: 12AM-8AM with 9 employees; 6AM-2PM (main shift) with 77 employees; 7AM-3PM with 5 employees; 8AM-4PM with 6 employees; 4PM-12AM with 12 employees. The life cycle for the garage building is estimated to be 75 years. The mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems are expected to have 20 year life cycles. DSNY will pursue LEED Silver Certification for the proposed garage. The second proposed structure on the site would be an enclosed 20,000 SF salt shed with capacity to store 10,000 tons of road salt for winter use. A fueling station would be located the proposed garage building and salt shed. The fueling station with an overhead canopy would provide diesel and unleaded gas for DSNY vehicles. DSNY has also committed to exclusive use of 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue as the access for entry and exiting the facility;
- DSNY has a \$130 million allocation in the budget committed for building and operating the proposed environmentally responsible facility. All fluids used by the wash bay would be captured by floor drains and processed through oil and water separators before discharge into the sanitary sewer. DSNY is committed to using cleaner and alternative fuel trucks throughout the fleet to attain lower emissions. Stormwater from the site would be directed into biofiltration and water separation infrastructure east of the new DSNY facility for treatment before discharge into Luyster Creek;
- The existing Queens CD1 62,000SF Garage is currently located at 34-28 21<sup>st</sup> Street (Block 523 Lot 12) in an R5 District in a mixed-use residential/commercial neighborhood of Astoria. The facility, formerly the site of a horse barn, was constructed in 1931 is a one-story 37,000SF building well below the average 80,000 SF size of DSNY district facilities. Some of the vehicles and equipment assigned to the 21<sup>st</sup> facility have been stored since February 2108 on leased land now subject to this site selection application;



- The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) Ravenswood Houses surround the existing facility. The garage is also adjacent to a park and playground. Space constraints has forced DSNY storage of vehicles on the surrounding streets impacting the area residential and commercial uses. NYCHA residents, community advocates, and elected officials have long requested DSNY to relocate the city-owned garage site and to have the site redeveloped for affordable housing;
- In 2014, following an inspection the NYC Department of Design and Construction (DDC) found the 21<sup>st</sup> Garage to be structurally deficient and undersized for DSNY’s daily operations. The report found floor slab deficiencies and two walls with major structural defects. There was a determination that the cost to rehabilitate the garage would not justify the short service life extension;
- Since 1990, the Queens 1 salt facility is currently located on the bed of a mapped street on the East River waterfront at 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and Vernon Boulevard in CD2. The unenclosed salt pile, protected by a tarp, is located approximately 1.2 miles away from the existing garage. Within two years this site will no longer be available to DSNY due to scheduled bulkhead repairs and in close proximity to the proposed BQX route;
- The proposed DSNY site is a vacant 9.8 acre industrial parcel adjacent to Luyster Creek within the Astoria IBZ. The proposed garage and salt shed would be built on the northern edge of Block 850, p/o Lot 350 (M3-1 District) and include the access driveway and a utilities easement. An approximately 0.8 acre portion of Block 826, Lot 42 (M3-1 and M1-1 Districts) would be used by DSNY for all vehicular access onto the development site from 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The entire site lies within the Coastal Zone Boundary. Since April 2018, DSNY has stored 23 collection trucks, 2 service sedans, and 12 personnel vehicles on Block 826 Lot 42 to alleviate the space constraints at the existing Queens 1 Garage. Tidal wetlands constitute 31,000 SF of the development site, including part of Luyster Creek. Additionally, the FAA leases and maintains an antenna measuring wind shear on the site that would require relocation elsewhere on site;
- Uses in the surrounding area are predominantly light industrial and commercial. Immediately east, the property is bounded by Luyster Creek. The Astoria Generating Station operates an electricity generating plant west of the site while Con Edison operates a large campus to the northeast. South of the project area, Bolt Parking LGA provides an off-site parking lot and shuttle service to LaGuardia Airport. Across Luyster Creek to the east, are other industrial and commercial uses such as Astoria Energy LLC’s electricity generating plant, piano manufacturer Steinway & Sons’ factory and showroom, and Beersmiths Brewery. To the southeast of the project area, there are four baseball diamonds along 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue and a soccer field owned by Con Ed and operated by the Federation of Italian-American organizations of Queens. The soccer field borders a private access road into the project area to the north as well as Bolt Parking’s location to the east. The area south of 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue are developed with predominantly low-rise housing;
- Community Board 1 (CB1) approved this application with conditions by a vote of thirty-one (31) in favor with one (1) against and one (1) abstention at the full board meeting held on February 18, 2020. CB1’s conditions are as follows:
  - 1. The DSNY’s design and construction RFP should include community waterfront access, shore treatment, and preservation of waterfront wetlands;
  - 2. Allocate 1% of the project’s construction budget under the City’s Percent for Art Program to help fund design and construction of a new waterfront access to Luyster Creek that includes a shore walkway and boat launching site or boathouse for future recreational and educational programs;
  - 3. Create a pedestrian access point to the Luyster Creek shoreline from 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue;
  - 4. Coordinate a waterfront access plan with Steinway Piano Company and the proposed film Wildflower Studios on the south side of Luyster Creek;
  - 5. Create a landscaped traffic separation and protection barrier on 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue between the existing ballfields and street;
  - 6. Upon completion of the QW01 Garage, DSNY should outreach to local schools and coordinate educational tours and programs about solar roofs and other sustainability topics;
  - 7. Begin community outreach for planning reuse of the vacated site in Ravenswood;
- At the March 12, 2020 Borough President’s Land Use Public Hearing, the DSNY representative said that the department is supportive of CB1’s conditions for public waterfront access.

**RECOMMENDATION**

The proposed DSNY Facility would replace the existing undersized and structurally unsound garage on 21<sup>st</sup> Street. The new site is large enough to contain onsite all DSNY vehicles, equipment and personnel servicing CD 1 with an opportunity to provide much needed open space and waterfront public access in an underserved area. Affordable housing especially for seniors remains an unmet need for Queens residents. This city-owned former garage site would significantly reduce the land cost of developing affordable housing.

Based on the above consideration, I hereby recommend approval of this application with the following conditions:

- when vacated, the city-owned DSNY CD1 Garage site is redeveloped to provide much needed affordable housing, particularly for seniors;
- new public access to the waterfront should be provided around the proposed new DSNY facility.



PRESIDENT, BOROUGH OF QUEENS

3/23/2020

DATE