

Queens Borough President Recommendation

APPLICATION: ULURP #200283 ZRQ

COMMUNITY BOARD: Q01

DOCKET DESCRIPTION

IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by M E D R E P Associates, LLC pursuant to Sections 197-c and 201 of the New York City Charter for a zoning text amendment to designate the Project Area as a Mandatory Inclusionary Housing ("MIH") area, Borough of Queens, Community District 1, as shown on a diagram (for illustrative purposes only) dated December 14, 2020, and subject to the conditions of CEQR Declaration E-593. (Related ULURP #200282 ZMQ);

PUBLIC HEARING

A Public Hearing was held by the Borough President via Zoom webinar and livestreamed on www.queensbp.org on Thursday, February 4, 2021 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:

- This application proposes a zoning text amendment to Appendix F to establish and map the rezoning area as a Mandatory Inclusionary Housing Area (MIH) map amendment. The proposed actions of the related applications would facilitate the development of an 11-story mixed use building at 30-02 Newtown Ave;
- Another application (ULURP #200282 ZMQ) concurrently filed with this application proposes a zoning map amendment to change Block 595 Lots 19, 26, 27, and p/o Lot 10 from a C4-4A District to a C4-4D District;
- The proposed development is an 11-story, 138,470 GSF mixed-use (residential, commercial, community facility) building. The building would reach a maximum height of 115 feet on 31st Street facing the elevated subway track before dropping down to 65 feet closer to 30th Street and Newtown Avenue closer to the lower density residential buildings. There would be 8400 SF of ground floor retail space as well as 5,696 SF of community facility space in portions of the cellar and ground floor that would include a 99-seat box theater. The applicant team is currently in talks to identify a tenant for the community facility space. The development would also contain 30 accessory parking spaces in a below-grade garage, accessible via a new curb cut and ramp on 30th Street. There would be a total of 104 dwelling units including 26 affordable under MIH Option 1 (25% of units @ 60% AMI). The development is projected to be built and fully operational by 2024;
- The area to be rezoned (Block 595 Lots 19, 26, 27, p/o 10) is an irregular zoning lot located on the southern block front of Newtown Avenue between 30th and 31st Street. The 15,556 SF site has a depth varying between 81 and 92 feet from Newtown Avenue. Lots 19, 26, and 27 are owned by the applicant while approximately 269 SF of Lot 10 included in this application are owned and utilized by Verizon. The rezoning area is currently mapped as a C4-4A District. The proposed zoning map change is to a C4-4D District. Both the existing C4-4A (4.0 to 4.6 FAR, 65 feet max building height, 50% parking requirement) and proposed C4-4D Districts (7.20 FAR, 105 feet max building height, 40% parking requirement) are contextual zoning districts that allow regional commercial uses and residential uses;
- The site is currently developed with 3 two-story commercial, auto repair buildings occupied by Finkelstein Inc., a tire repair and wholesale business. The Finkelstein family has operated their business at 30-02 Newtown Avenue since 1919 and are relocating their headquarters. However, they intend to stay in western Queens since the majority of their current employees (~30) are local or are used to commuting to this part of the borough;
- The surrounding area primarily consists of residential (one-family detached to larger multi-family apartment buildings) and commercial uses. Newtown Avenue, 31st Street, and 30th Avenue serve as the area's commercial corridors and are lined with both commercial buildings and mixed-use residential, commercial buildings with ground floor retail uses. The development site, located in a transit zone, is well-served by mass transit including the elevated N and W subway lines running north-south along 31st Street and the Q102 and Q18 buses running along 30th Avenue;
- Community Board 1 (CB 1) approved the application with nineteen (19) in favor, eleven (11) opposed, and three (3) abstaining at their monthly meeting held on January 19, 2021. During discussion of the item, concerns were raised similar to those brought up during the January 4, 2021 meeting of CB 1's Land Use Committee which recommended approval by a vote of seven (7) in favor, none (0) against, and two (2) abstaining. Concerns included: setting up delivery drop-off zones, flexible rent cost of community space, the ratio of MIH units to market-rate units, the proposed building height in comparison to surrounding heights;

QUEENS BOROUGH PRESIDENT RECOMMENDATION

ULURP #200283 ZRQ

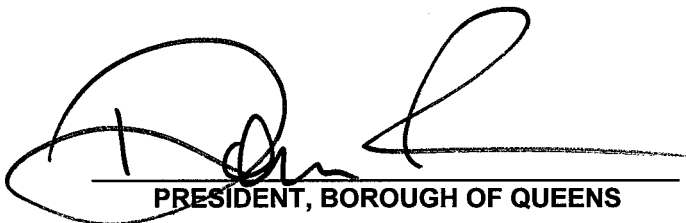
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- At the Borough President's Land Use Public Hearing, the Borough President asked questions regarding the potential creation of a delivery drop off zone, open green space, and local hiring. The applicant responded that they would reach out to the Department of Transportation to explore the feasibility creating a delivery drop off zone. On February 16, 2021, the applicant submitted a letter to the Borough President committing to local and MWBE hiring goals for the project; they affirmed they would work with the office as well as non-profit organizations such as Urban Upbound to find skilled candidates from western Queens. They also stated that aside from a green roof included in the proposal, the applicant would commit to exploring ways to support the stewardship of nearby Athens Square (also a request from Community Board 1) and meet with both the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation and community parks advocates to discuss maintenance plans and potential improvements.

RECOMMENDATION

There is clearly need for more affordable housing in New York City and particularly for seniors. Based on the above consideration, I hereby recommend approval of this application with the following condition:

- There should be a goal of 30% for local hiring and use of MWBE businesses in the construction and development of this project. There should also be quarterly reporting on the numbers of people hired and if the 30% hiring goal has been reached;
- The applicant should contact the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation to discuss their commitment to maintenance and potential improvements for Athens Square Park or other area park facilities.



PRESIDENT, BOROUGH OF QUEENS

3/2/21

DATE