

Queens Borough President Recommendation

APPLICATION: 25-46 Far Rockaway Boulevard Rezoning
COMMUNITY BOARD: Q14

DOCKET DESCRIPTION

ULURP #200232 ZMQ – IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by Sheldon Lobel P.C. on behalf of Queens Realty Holdings of NY, LTD pursuant to Sections 197-c and 201 of the New York City Charter for an amendment of the Zoning Map, Section No. 31a, by changing an existing R4-1 District to an R6B District property bounded by Ocean Crest Boulevard, a line 115 feet northeasterly of Hartman Lane, Beach Channel Drive, a line 80 feet northeasterly of Hartman Lane, Far Rockaway Boulevard, and Hartman Lane, Borough of Queens, Community District 14, as shown on a diagram (for illustrative purposes only) dated November 7, 2022, and subject to the conditions of CEQR Declaration E-676. (Related ULURP #220330 ZRQ)

ULURP #220330 ZRQ – IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by Sheldon Lobel P.C. on behalf of Queens Realty Holdings of NY, LTD 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 14, as shown on a diagram (for illustrative purposes only) dated November 7, 2022, and subject to conditions of CEQR Declaration E-676. (Related ULURP #200232 ZMQ)

PUBLIC HEARING

A Public Hearing was held by the Queens Borough President via Zoom webinar and livestreamed on www.queensbp.org on Thursday, February 2, 2023 at 9:30 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 Applicant is requesting a zoning map amendment to rezone an existing R4-1 district to a R6B district. The area to be rezoned (Block 15737, Lots 1 and 10; Block 15785, Lots 4 and 55, p/o 7 and 54) is generally bounded by Ocean Crest Boulevard, a line 115 feet northeasterly of Hartman Lane, Beach Channel Drive, a line 80 feet northeasterly of Hartman Lane, Far Rockaway Boulevard, and Hartman Lane. The proposed rezoning would facilitate the construction of a new residential building;
- The Applicant has also concurrently filed another application (ULURP #200247 ZRQ) to amend Appendix F of the Zoning Resolution to map and establish the proposed rezoning area as a Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) Area;
- The rezoning would facilitate the redevelopment of the applicant’s property (Block 15785, Lots 4 and 55, the “Development Site”) to include a five-story, 32,500-SF (2.16 Floor Area Ratio (FAR)) building with 40 dwelling units (including 10 MIH Option 1 units). The Proposed Development would have a total height of 50 feet and 22 parking spaces at the cellar level of the building. There will be an elevator which will include the cellar level. The Proposed Development will include flood-mitigating factors such locating building controls on the roof and wet flood-proofing the cellar;

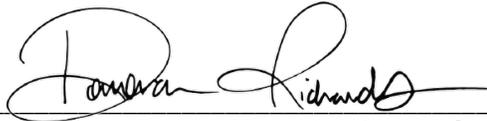
- The Development Site is approximately 15,034 SF and is currently improved with two vacant 3-story houses and vacant lots. In 1961, the Development Site was originally zoned both R3-2 and R4 as a part of the Zoning Resolution. In 2008, however, the site was rezoned to R4-1 due to the Rockaway Neighborhood Rezoning. This 280-block rezoning was an effort to protect the special, low-density character of the five Rockaway neighborhoods. The rezoning changed the existing R3, R3-2, R4, R5, and R6 zoning districts to contextual zoning districts and permitted a moderate increase in residential and commercial density along the peninsula's major corridors. There was also an 82-block rezoning to the north and south of the site in 2006. The Bayswater Far Rockaway rezoning was also an effort to maintain the character of the Rockaways, responding to overdevelopment concerns due to the subdivision of large lots and the replacement of one and two-family homes with multifamily buildings;
- The Rezoning Area includes a charter school (Challenge Preparatory Charter School) across the street along Beach Channel Drive. While the school is not included in the Proposed Development, it is included with the Rezoning Area for consistency. Within a ¼-mile, zoning surrounding the site consists of R2, R3-2, R4A, R4-1, and R6 districts. Bayswater Park is approximately 700 feet from the Development Site. The site is also two blocks from the Beach 25th Street A train station and the Q22 bus line. Surrounding land uses include a single- and semi-detached residential homes, community facility space (nursing home), and local commercial uses (a grocery store);
- At a public hearing held on January 10, 2023, Community Board 14 (CB14) voted to oppose the application with conditions by a vote of twenty-one (21) in favor, zero (0) opposed and one (1) abstention. Their conditions were to oppose R6B, accept R5D, and to remove school property from the Rezoning Area. CB14 reminded the Applicant of their moratorium on any development larger than R5D. The Applicant explained that an R6B rezoning is necessary to add affordable housing units to the development, and the difference in zoning is 2,500 SF;
- At the Borough President's Land Use Public Hearing, the Applicant team addressed questions from the Borough President, including: their correspondence with the charter school included in the rezoning, the MIH affordability option, flood mitigation, solar panels, local hiring and parking. The Applicant team responded to these questions respectively: Council Member Brooks-Powers connected the Applicant team to the charter school, and the school expressed conditional approval so long as the Proposed Development remained residential; the Applicant plans to map both Options 1 and 2 within the MIH area, but they have budgeted for Option 1; the Applicant team discussed using concrete in the cellar with automatic entry and exit of flood water; the Applicant confirmed they intended to use solar panels on the roof; the team is partnering with local nonprofits and community-based organizations to hire residents in the Rockaways; and lastly, the Applicant team has proposed 22 parking spaces but can add more spaces with stacked parking;
- The Borough President's Office has received written testimony and petitions from the general public regarding this Proposed Development. Seventy-five (75) residents signed a petition opposed to the project, and forty (40) residents signed a petition in favor of the project. Those who signed in opposition explained that healthcare facilities and other social services are more important than a multi-family building, and may create conditions for overcrowding for schools, public transit and street parking. Those who signed in approval of the project noted local hiring and workforce training for youths aged 18-25 years old are net benefits. The Office also received written testimony – five (5) letters in support and one (1) against the Proposed Development. The letters written in support came from the Far Rockaway Nonprofit Coalition (FRANC), the Rockaway East Merchants Association 4 United Synergy (REMA4US), Macedonia Baptist Church, the First Baptist Church of Far Rockaway, and Arverne Church of God. The letter written in opposition came from "Concerned Residents Against 25-46 Far Rockaway Boulevard Rezoning." All letters echoed similar opinions as the petitions.

RECOMMENDATION

Improving a vacant assemblage with a 40-unit, multi-family building furthers the City's goals of building more affordable housing and stimulating the local economy.

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

- There should be a minimum 25% goal to include M/WBE firms, hiring of local residents and working with locally-based organizations and community groups for outreach and job fairs when hiring and contracting for this project. There should be quarterly reporting of these hiring initiatives to the Borough President and Council Member until the hiring goal has been reached;
- The Applicant should consider setting aside more units under MIH Option 1, working with the City to explore additional, applicable public subsidies; and
- The Applicant should install solar panels on the Proposed Development's roof as discussed, as well as adding sustainable elements to the front, rear and side yards such as rain gardens and/or native landscaping.



PRESIDENT, BOROUGH OF QUEENS

02/10/2023

DATE