

Queens Borough President Recommendation

APPLICATION: Whitestone Lanes Rezoning
COMMUNITY BOARD: Q07

DOCKET DESCRIPTION

ULURP #230091 ZMQ – IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by Mar Mar Realty, LLC pursuant to Sections 197-c and 201 of the New York City Charter for an amendment of the Zoning Map, Section No. 10a, changing from an M1-1 District to an R7A District property bounded by the southeasterly service road of the Whitestone Expressway, Linden Place, a line 240 feet northerly of 31st Road, a line 60 feet easterly of Farrington Street, 31st Road, and Farrington Street and its northerly centerline prolongation, Borough of Queens, Community District 7, as shown on a diagram (for illustrative purposes only) dated July 10, 2023, and subject to the conditions of CEQR Declaration E-719. (Related ULURP #N230092 ZRQ).

ULURP #N230092 ZRQ – IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by Mar Mar Realty, LLC pursuant to Sections 197-c and 201 of the New York City Charter a zoning text amendment to designate the Project Area as a Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (“MIH”) area, Borough of Queens, Community District 7, as shown on a diagram (for illustrative purposes only) dated May 21, 2023, and subject to the conditions of CEQR Declaration E-719. (Related ULURP #230091 ZMQ).

PUBLIC HEARING

A Public Hearing was held by the Queens Borough President both in-person at 120-55 Queens Boulevard, Borough President’s Conference Room, Kew Gardens NY 11424 and virtually livestreamed on www.queensbp.org on Thursday, October 12 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 was one (1) speaker on the application. 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 for a Zoning Map Amendment proposes to rezone three (3) properties identified as Block 4370, Lots 1, 15 and 48, generally bound by Whitestone Expressway, Linden Place, 31st Road, and Farrington Street from an existing M1-1 district to an R7-A;
- The Proposed Rezoning would allow redevelopment of an existing “Whitestone Lanes” Bowling Alley with a 377,871 square-foot (SF), 9-story and cellar residential building (415 units) and approximately 200 parking spaces. Within the 415 units, 113 units would be affordable according to the Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) Option 1 Program, or 25% of residential floor area set aside for individuals and families making an averaged 60% Area Median Income (AMI). The maximum building height is based on the sky-exposure plane, which begins 30 feet above the street line. The Applicant also included a 14,400-sf landscaped Publicly Accessible Area (PAA) to the south of the building along Farrington Street and 31st Road within the Proposed Development. Within the PAA, the Applicant proposes a community farm, community meeting area, social sports area, fitness and picnic areas, as well as passive recreation areas;
- The project area consists of three Tax Lots (1, 15, and 48) of Block 4370 which encompasses approximately 266 feet along the south side of the Whitestone Expressway Service Road, approximately 283 feet along the Linden Place, 460 feet along Farrington Street, and approximately 60 feet along 31st Road. The development site resembles an L-shape with frontage along four streets;
- The existing M1-1 zoning district allows a maximum FAR of 1.0 for commercial, industrial, and light manufacturing uses (Use Group 4). The proposed R7A zoning district allows for buildings up to 4.0 FAR (4.6 with MIH) and generally produces 7- to 9-story buildings. A maximum lot coverage is 65 percent for interior and through lots and 100 percent on corner lots. Above a base height of 40 to 75 feet, the building must set back to a depth of 10 feet on a wide street and 15 feet on a narrow street, before rising to a maximum of 95 feet or 9 stories (with MIH). A 50 percent parking requirement for all dwelling units and affordable units are reduced outside the transit zone;
- The surrounding area is developed with a variety of uses and range in height. The development site sits at the intersection of College Point, Flushing, and Whitestone neighborhoods. The area to the North is College Point consisting of the Special College Point District with commercial/manufacturing businesses and contains large one and two-story commercial complexes. The area to the west and south is developed with commercial and light industrial / manufacturing uses a strip mall style retail complex with a series of eating and drinking establishments, banks and supermarkets. The area immediate to the site is comprised of a varied mixture of land uses including small residential, mixed-use residential with commercial, light manufacturing, a 6-story cooperative (Linden Towers), and a 6-story complex commercial building (DCAS/Department of education) on Lot 50 contains residential units;

- Community Board 7 (CB7) conditionally approved the application by a vote of thirty-eight (38) in favor, one (1) opposed and no (0) abstentions at a public hearing held on September 18, 2023 based on the Land Use Committees recommendations:
 1. Eliminate any Community Facility Use.
 2. Maximum # of Dwelling Units to be 350 units.
 3. Minimum # of Parking Spaces to be 300 spaces.
 4. Linden Place Site Access will be restricted to right-turn southbound and no Egress will be allowed.
 5. Provide (2) on-grade Parking Spaces for UPS, FEDEX, Amazon Delivery Vehicles
 6. Provide a "Parking Garden" with approximately (34) on-grade Parking Spaces on Farrington Street with an appealing greenspace area with trees and shrubbery, and a 6' high Estate Style Fence with lighting and security as replacement to the proposed PA;

- At the Borough President's Land Use Hearing, the Borough President asked a number of questions related to the application. The first question pertained to the total number of housing units within the Proposed Development – the Borough President stated that, because the city is in a housing crisis, he would have liked to see the maximum proposed units (415 units) attached to this Proposed Development, not CB7's maximum (350 units). The Applicant acknowledged this statement. The Borough President also asked why there was no community facility space or commercial space proposed within the Proposed Development. The Applicant explained CB7's objections when the project was first introduced: 1) CB7 felt adding more commercial uses was not necessary based on the nearby retail uses, and it would create more traffic, negatively impacting the surrounding area, and 2) CB7 also felt that adding community facility space within the Proposed Development may generate more traffic, especially if the Proposed Development were to change from mixed-use to strictly community facility use (which, by the proposed zoning district, 4.0 FAR community space would be allowed as-of-right). With regard to local hiring, the Applicant explained that there are ongoing, good-faith negotiations with a community-based organization recommended by the Council Member. With regard to sustainability features on the rooftop, the Applicant's architect stated the project would include solar panels, a green roof with stormwater runoff, and energy-saving elements such as three-paned glass. The Land Use Committee Chair for CB7 was the only speaker at the Borough President's Land Use Public Hearing. He gave clarifying comments based on the Board's decision on the application. There were no other speakers, and the hearing was closed.

RECOMMENDATION

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

- There should be a minimum 30% 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. Special attention should be made to nearby NYCHA developments (i.e., Bland Houses and Latimer Gardens). 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 pursue 415 housing units as originally proposed with the certified rezoning application;
- With regard to affordability, the Applicant should introduce a significant number of units for families and individuals who make 30% AMI; and
- Within the PAA, the Applicant should include active playground equipment for children.



PRESIDENT, BOROUGH OF QUEENS

10/17/2023

DATE