



CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

May 6, 2015 / Calendar No. 12

C 150115 PQK

IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by the Department for the Aging and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services pursuant to Section 197-c of the New York City Charter for acquisition of property located at 5901 13th Avenue (Block 5712, Lot 1) for continued use as a senior center, Borough of Brooklyn, Community District 12:

The application for acquisition of property was filed on September 18, 2014 by the Department for the Aging (DFTA) and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) to facilitate the continued use of a senior center, known as the Amico Senior center, at 5901 13th Avenue (Block 5712, Lot 1) in Borough Park, Community District 12, Brooklyn.

BACKGROUND

The Department for the Aging (DFTA) and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) seek the acquisition of approximately 18,750 square feet of floor area in a building located at 5901 13th Avenue (Block 5712, Lot 1) for continued use as a senior center. The center has been operating at this location since 1973. On July 7, 1993 (C 920232 PQQ, Cal No. 31), an application to acquire the facility was approved by the City Planning Commission for a term of 20 years. The lease on the property expired on July 6, 2013.

The site is developed with a privately-owned, three-story building with a total floor area of approximately 30,000 square feet. The senior center occupies approximately 18,750 square feet on the second and third floors. The rest of the building is occupied by a privately operated school.

Amico Senior Center provides services to senior citizens 60 years of age or older and is open daily from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday. An average of 265 seniors use the center every day, with a total membership of over 7,000 adults. The facility provides 250 to 300 meals daily with an array of recreational activities and programs that promote health, fitness and nutrition, such as dancing and exercising classes. In addition, the facility provides assistance with social service needs, such as applying for entitlement programs and other

public benefits. The Center also partners with students from nearby public schools who volunteer and participate in various intergenerational programs. Additionally, the facility provides internships to graduate students in the field of social work. The senior center employs a total of approximately 10 people.

On the second floor the senior center has a dining room, four restrooms, a billiards room, a card room, two multi-purpose rooms and offices where members receive services from a social worker. On the third floor, there is another dining room, kitchen, four restrooms, offices and additional multi-purpose rooms. Members, staff and visitors enter the facility through an entrance at grade located on 59th Street. An elevator is located near the building's entrance in order to accommodate members with wheelchairs or other physical disabilities.

The senior center is well served by public transportation and is accessible from the "N" and "D" subway lines. There is a station located two blocks away at New Utrecht Avenue and 61st Street. Also within a few blocks of the senior center are the B9 and B16 bus lines.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The application (C 150115 POK) was reviewed pursuant to the New York State Environmental Quality Review (SEQRA), and SEQRA regulations set forth in Volume 6 of the New York Code of Rules and Regulations, Section 617.00 et seq. and the City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Rules of Procedure of 1991 and Executive Order No. 91 of 1977. The lead agency is the Department for the Aging (DFTA). This application was determined to be a Type II action which requires no further environmental review.

UNIFORM LAND USE REVIEW

This application (C 150115 POK) was certified as complete by the Department of City Planning on December 1, 2014 and was duly referred to Community Board 12 and the Brooklyn Borough President, in accordance with Title 62 of the Rules of the City of New York, Section 2-02(b).

Community Board Public Hearing

Community Board 12 held a public hearing on this application (C 150115 PQQ) on February 24, 2015 and on February 25, 2014, adopted a resolution recommending approval of the application by a vote of 32 in favor, none opposed and none abstaining.

Borough President Recommendation

This application (C 150115 PQQ) was considered by the Borough President, who issued a recommendation approving the application on March 11, 2015, with the following conditions:

1. That the lease renewal ensures a minimum of 20-year right to lease and is inclusive of shorter term lease renewals.
2. That street trees be planted along the 59th Street sidewalk and installation be coordinated by the Department for the Aging with the Department of Parks and Recreation in consultation with Community Board 12 and local elected officials and maintained by the landlord pursuant to the lease agreement.
3. That the Department of Environmental Preservation (DEP) undertake a study in consultation with Community Board 12 and local elected officials to determine the appropriateness of incorporating bioswales along the curb adjacent to the Amico Senior Center, and if deemed cost-effective, DEP should implement the construction of bio-swales.
4. That the Department for the Aging coordinate with the Department of Transportation, in consultation with Community Board 12 and local elected officials, to have bulb-outs/neck-downs constructed at the intersection adjacent to the Amico Senior Center.

City Planning Commission Public Hearing

On March 4, 2015, the City Planning Commission scheduled March 18, 2015 for a public hearing on this application (C 150115 PQQ). The hearing was duly held on March 18, 2015 (Calendar No. 9). There were five speakers in favor and none opposed.

The Director of Amico Senior Center spoke in favor of the application, describing the history of repairs at the facility and the current physical conditions. She also discussed the facility's programs and services, and the evolving needs of the area's senior population. A member of Amico Senior Center spoke in favor of the application and described his experience as a member.

A representative from the Department for the Aging (DFTA) spoke in favor of the application, describing the conditions of the facility and its sizable membership compared with other city-leased senior centers. Two representatives from the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) spoke in favor of the application, providing further details on the draft scope of work and the current conditions of the facility. One of the representatives indicated that the building is in overall good condition and that the site meets the needs of operation.

There were no other speakers and the hearing was closed.

CONSIDERATION

The Commission believes that the acquisition of property located at 5901 13th Avenue (Block 5712, Lot 1) by the Department for the Aging (DFTA) and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) is appropriate.

A senior center has operated from this site since 1973, providing much-needed services to approximately 265 seniors daily in the Borough Park neighborhood of Brooklyn, Community District 12. The facility is well-served by public transportation, being in close proximity to the “N” and “D” subway lines, as well as the B9 and B16 bus lines. Moreover, the facility is well located to serve the growing number of aging residents in the Borough Park and nearby Dyker Heights neighborhood.

The Commission acknowledges that a number of senior centers went through the lease renewal process 20 years ago, and that many of those facilities had issues regarding their physical condition and on-going maintenance. As many of these facilities are now returning through the public review process for lease renewal, the Commission continues to be concerned about these issues, particularly as it relates to the safety of the users of the facility.

The Commission is pleased to note that a scope of work has been provided which identifies various facility improvements. The Commission is also pleased to note that the Amico Senior

Center was visited by staff from the Department of City Planning, DCAS and The Department for the Aging who found the facility to be appropriate, in good condition, and adequate in regards to satisfying the operational needs of a senior center.

Additionally, the Commission finds the facility to be a highly active, vibrant space that fosters social interaction between seniors residing in the neighborhood and provides them with a variety of educational, recreational and health-related programs and services. The Commission believes that the improvements described in the scope of work, when complete, will further advance the safety and well-being of users of the space.

In response to the Brooklyn Borough President's recommendation, that the lease be renewed for a minimum of 20 years, a representative from DCAS indicated at the City Planning Commission public hearing that the agency supports a long-term lease of 20 years. In regards to the additional recommendations—that street trees be planted along the 59th Street sidewalk, that the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) conduct a study to install bioswales along the curb, and that DFTA coordinate with the Department of Transportation (DOT) to improve pedestrian safety—the Commission encourages DFTA, in conjunction with members of the facility, to examine the feasibility of these proposals and evaluate their benefits to seniors who utilize the facility. In particular, since Amico Senior Center is located adjacent to existing manufacturing uses, the Commission encourages DFTA and DOT to examine streetscape or transportation-related improvements that would ensure seniors can safely access the facility.

The Commission is pleased that the applicant plans to acquire this site long term to provide needed senior services. Going forward, the Commission is concerned that changing demographics or evolving market conditions may affect the siting of future facilities. Therefore, it is important that planning for future senior service needs begin now. The Commission encourages DFTA to assess its needs and properties across the city to better plan for the future. In this regard, DFTA should lead a robust inter-agency effort with other city agencies, including the Department of City Planning and the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, to identify future development opportunities and other

planning resources that can support the provision of subsidized senior services.

RESOLUTION

RESOLVED, that this application submitted by the Department for the Aging (DFTA) and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS), pursuant to 197-c of the New York City Charter, for the acquisition of property located at 5901 13th Avenue (Block 5712, Lot 1) for continued use as a senior center, is approved.

The above resolution (C 150115 PQK), duly adopted by the City Planning Commission on May 6, 2015 (Calendar No. 12), is filed with the Office of the Speaker, City Council, and the Borough President in accordance with the requirements of Section 197-d of the New York City Charter.

CARL WEISBROD, *Chairman*

**RAYANN BESSER, IRWIN G. CANTOR, P.E., ALFRED C. CERULLO, III,
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ORLANDO MARIN, LARISA ORTIZ**, *Commissioners*



E-mail/ Fax transmittal

To:
Community District 12 Distribution

From:
Borough President Eric L. Adams

Date:
March 11, 2015

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ULURP Recommendation:
Amico Senior Center
150115 PQK

NO. Pages, Including Cover:
7

Attached is the recommendation report for ULURP application 150115 PQK.
If you have any questions, please contact Richard Bearak at 718-802-4057.

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Brooklyn Borough President Recommendation
CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
22 Reade Street, New York, NY 10007
CalendarOffice@planning.nyc.gov



INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Return this completed form with any attachments to the Calendar Information Office, City Planning Commission, Room 2E at the above address.
2. Send one copy with any attachments to the applicant's representatives as indicated on the Notice of Certification.

APPLICATION #: 150115 POK – Amico Senior Center, 5901 13th Avenue

In the matter of an application submitted by the Department for the Aging and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, pursuant to Section 197-c of the New York City Charter for the acquisition of property located at 5901 13th Avenue (Block 5712, Lot 1) for the continued use as a senior center.

COMMUNITY DISTRICT NO.12

BOROUGH OF BROOKLYN

RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE
 APPROVE WITH
MODIFICATIONS/CONDITIONS

DISAPPROVE
 DISAPPROVE WITH
MODIFICATIONS/CONDITIONS

SEE ATTACHED

BOROUGH PRESIDENT

March 11, 2015

DATE

**Recommendation for the proposed 5901 13th Avenue,
Amico Senior Center - 150115 PQQ**

The Department for the Aging (DFTA) and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) are seeking approval to acquire property that would facilitate continued use as a senior center. DFTA has funded operation of the senior center at 5901 13th Avenue since 1971 and seeks to ensure that senior services will continue to be provided for the Borough Park community.

On February 9th, 2015, the Borough President held a public hearing on the proposed special permit application.

The representative for the applicant, DFTA, noted that the proposed application would allow Amico Senior Center to continue operating at its current location serving an average of 264 meals per day and offering opportunities for socialization and various physical and mentally-stimulating activities.

Thousands of seniors have sought a sense of community, belonging and fellowship from Amico Senior Center while it provides a safety net for older and frail individuals who need support. The Center benefits the community by having and maintaining multiple affiliations with other community organizations. The Center offers refuge to all community residents during seasonal times of extreme cooling and heating.

In response to the Borough President's concern regarding short-term leasing for community facilities in Brooklyn, the representative for Amico indicated that DFTA requested the maximum 20-year term lease from DCAS, which is still negotiating the lease terms. The representative for Amico has yet to view the term-sheet, so they were unable to confirm the lease duration as of the public hearing date.

Amico pursues substantial local outreach in order to achieve maximum attendance and service benefits to the community. As a result of competition from numerous pop-up senior centers, Amico has developed a new website and directed interns to spread the word to local seniors by going door-to-door, which is inclusive of, but not limited to, the Polish, Chinese, Italian and Hispanic communities. Amico does not have a delivery service; any community benefits that Amico provides must be obtained directly from the senior center.

Regarding the Borough President's support for Vision Zero, DFTA supports the proposition for curb-extensions to make commutes safer for seniors. DFTA just started conversing with the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) regarding curb-extensions. The representative for DFTA noted that 13th Avenue, being the busier street, would be an ideal location for implementing curb-extensions. However, since the center is adjacent to some industrial properties, modifying the sidewalk could prove challenging due to the effect it would have on certain loading and unloading abilities for these businesses.

The representative for Amico noted that a request for trees at 59th Street was denied several years ago because it was determined that trees would be too close to a traffic light. The representative from DFTA stated that they would reach out to the Department of Environmental Protection regarding the possibility of installing a bioswale in an effort to minimize storm-water run-off.

Regarding locally based hiring, the representative for Amico stated that approximately 75% of its employees live close enough to walk to work and that future hires are usually determined via employee communications and word-of-mouth. The same locally-based technique also applies to supporting local businesses when purchasing is needed.

Consideration

Community Board 12 (CB 12) voted 32 in favor, 0 against and 0 abstaining for the application.

Through this building designation and lease renewal, an average of 265 seniors are expected to be able to continue receiving services that promote social wellbeing and physical health. The center provides meal service, ranging from 250-300 lunches per day. It also provides information for seniors regarding social services and assistance when they apply for entitlement programs and other senior benefits. There is also a wide range of educational and recreational programs and activities for the seniors, including health promotion and nutrition education. Also, several groups of developmentally disabled students volunteer at the center throughout the year.

The senior center staffs approximately 10 employees. It occupies the 2nd and 3rd floors of a three-story building, and uses approximately 18,750 sq. ft. of floor area. The 1st floor had been occupied by a city-funded daycare, but is now a privately operated school. The senior center is ADA compliant and is conveniently accessible by public transportation, including the D and N trains and the B9 and B16 bus lines.

The Borough President supports development that is appropriate for the context of the neighborhood and supports the needs of the community. He generally supports land use actions that seek to support the continuation of community facilities that provide services to all Brooklynites, especially seniors.

This senior center serves an important role in the local economy by employing approximately 10 people. The continuation of this center will not only secure its current workforce, but also allow family members of the attending seniors to pursue an optimum work week while knowing that their elderly family members are partaking in the services provided by Amico Senior Center.

The Borough President believes it is vital for senior community members to have easy access to community amenities such as senior centers. He suggests that as part of its outreach process, the Amico Senior Center should consult with Community Board 12 and

local elected officials to reach the maximum number of locally-based senior citizens as possible.

Though the Borough President is generally supportive of the proposed development, he is concerned that the lease-term of interest to DFTA is not yet assured. In addition, he believes there are opportunities to secure street trees, construct a bio-swale and to improve street crossings for seniors by constructing bulb-outs or neck-downs.

Lease Duration

The representative for DFTA expressed her agency's interest in obtaining a 20-year lease, though it has not been determined if DCAS will secure such a term on DFTA's behalf. The Borough President is regularly concerned about short-term leases for community facilities. As more areas of Brooklyn become magnets for real estate development, the Borough President is concerned that the landlord might elect to pursue a more lucrative use of the land by discontinuing its use as a senior center. The Borough President has already witnessed this profit-seeking practice in other parts of Brooklyn. For example, the new property owner of the Swinging Sixties Senior Center in Williamsburg has recently attempted to displace the center – which has served the community for decades – for redevelopment opportunities that would without a doubt prove more lucrative. Additionally, a children's daycare center was recently displaced in South Slope when the site was sold to a developer.

The Borough President is against negotiating ill-advised short-term lease agreements. A long-term lease guarantees that Amico Senior Center does not fall victim to discretionary profit-seeking actions by the landlord and therefore ensures that the facility will be a community benefit for decades to come.

It is imperative that the City take actions through its land use process to adequately demonstrate to the community that the City is truly the community's partner. Whether provided directly through the City or through non-profits, the Borough Park community has a legitimate need for supportive services that work to enhance the lives of area residents. Placing necessary senior center facilities at risk through the pursuit of inadequate leasing terms is not sound public policy. The Borough President believes that the City agencies that support community needs deserve reasonable and fair lease-renewal terms which allow the City the ability to secure terms no less than 20 years, inclusive of multiple shorter term leases and renewal rights for the City.

The Borough President calls on the City Council to obtain a commitment from the Administration for such a lease arrangement prior to its approval of this land use action.

Street Tree Planting and Storm Water Management Policies

The Borough President's policy is to make neighborhoods more welcoming through beautification measures and to reduce the urban "heat island" effect in canopy deficient areas of Brooklyn. He believes that vacated tree pits or sidewalks absent of tree pits are potential resources that should be transformed through tree planting. Therefore, street trees should be planted along the 59th Street sidewalk and maintained by the landlord

pursuant to the lease agreement, with installation of the trees coordinated by DFTA along with the Department of Parks and Recreation, in consultation with CB12 and local elected officials.

The Borough President calls on the City Council to obtain from DCAS for a tree maintenance agreement commitment to be incorporated into the lease.

The Borough President seeks opportunities to promote the installation of bioswales whenever possible. Bioswales defer storm water from entering the City's water pollution control plants. The Borough President believes that bioswales are more than just a community beautification tool; they significantly improve stormwater management while cleaning our environment. Bioswales are consistent with the recently announced Brooklyn Waterfront Greenway Stormwater Management Plan that is supported by the Borough President.

The Borough President recommends that DEP investigate, in consultation with CB12 and local elected officials, the possibility of installing a bioswale on 59th Street, in conjunction with the street tree planting effort, in an attempt to defer stormwater from entering the City's water pollution control plants.

Advancing Vision Zero Policies

The Borough President is a supporter of the Mayor's Vision Zero strategy. One component of Vision Zero is to extend sidewalks into the roadway as a means of shortening the path where pedestrians cross in front of traffic lanes. The sidewalk extensions, also known as bulb-outs or neck-downs, make drivers more aware of pedestrian crossings and encourage drivers to slow down at intersections where pedestrians are present. It is the Borough President's policy to support NYC DOT's Safe Routes for Seniors/to School programs. One component of these programs is for DOT to install traffic calming infrastructure, like bulb-outs or neck-downs at intersections where senior citizen centers and/or child daycare centers exist, to improve safety. By installing more bulb-outs or neck-downs, seniors and children will benefit because more of their commute will be spent on sidewalks, especially near dangerous intersections. At the same time, all users of the roadway will benefit from a safer street. These improvements should be coordinated with slow zones around schools and installation of countdown clocks at signalized intersections. The Borough President believes that DFTA should coordinate construction of these curb extensions with DOT, in consultation with CB12 and local elected officials.

Recommendation

Be it resolved that the Brooklyn Borough President, pursuant to sections 197-c of the New York City Charter, recommends that the City Planning Commission and City Council approve the land use action requested according to the following conditions:

1. That the lease renewal ensures a minimum of 20-year right to lease and is inclusive of shorter term lease renewals.

2. That street trees be planted along the 59th Street sidewalk and installation be coordinated by the Department for the Aging with the Department of Parks and Recreation in consultation with Community Board 12 and local elected officials and maintained by the landlord pursuant to the lease agreement.

Be it further resolved:

1. That the Department of Environmental Preservation (DEP) undertake a study in consultation with Community Board 12 and local elected officials to determine the appropriateness of incorporating bioswales along the curb adjacent to the Amico Senior Center, and if deemed cost-effective, DEP should implement the construction of bioswales.
2. That the Department of Aging coordinate with the Department of Transportation, in consultation with Community Board 12 and local elected officials, to have bulb-outs/deck-downs constructed at the intersection adjacent to the Amico Senior Center.