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September 5, 2018 / Calendar No. 5

C 160160 PQX

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**IN THE MATTER OF** an application submitted by the Administration for Children’s Services 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 1880 Watson Avenue (Block 3732, Lot 39) for continued use as a child care facility, Borough of the Bronx, Community District 9.

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This application for acquisition of property was filed on January 8, 2016 by the Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) to facilitate the continued use of property located at 1880 Watson Avenue (Block 3732, Lot 39), in Bronx Community District 9, as a child care facility.

**BACKGROUND**

ACS and DCAS are seeking the acquisition of property to facilitate the continued operation of a child care center, known as the Watson Avenue Early Childhood Center, in the Soundview neighborhood of the Bronx. This site has been used to provide child care since 1975, and was the subject of a previous acquisition, approved by the Commission on January 9, 1995 (C 930270 PQX, Cal. No. 1). The previous lease expired on January 2, 2016. The facility has operated since then under a month-to-month license agreement. The proposed action would allow the negotiation of a new lease.

The project site is located in an R5 zoning district, which allows day care centers as-of-right. The surrounding land use is predominantly residential, typified by two- and three-story attached and semi-detached homes. The project area is well-served by public transportation, including the BX 38, BX 39, and BxM8 bus lines and the 6 subway line, all of which stop within three blocks of the site.

The facility is located on a privately-owned lot on Watson Avenue, at its intersection with Underhill Avenue. The two-story building, which is fully occupied by the day care center, sits on

a 20,192-square-foot lot, and includes a total floor area of 30,740-square feet. Fire protection sprinklers have not been installed in the building.

The Watson Avenue Childhood center is permitted to serve up to 171 preschool-aged children. Pre-schoolers may attend the program full-time, from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday. The center provides daily meal service (breakfast, lunch, and a snack), supervised playtime (indoor and outdoor), and education focused on developmentally appropriate practices to enhance children's physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development. The center is staffed by 53 professional, paraprofessional, and support staff.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

This application (C 160160 PQX) was reviewed pursuant to the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) and the 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 Rules of Procedure of 1991 and Executive Order No. 91 of 1977. The lead agency is ACS. This application was determined to be a Type II action, which requires no further environmental review.

### **UNIFORM LAND USE REVIEW**

This application (C 160160 PQX) was certified as complete by the Department of City Planning on April 23, 2018, and was duly referred to Bronx Community Board 9 and the Bronx Borough President, in accordance with Title 62 of the Rules of the City of New York, Section 2-02(b).

### **Community Board Public Hearing**

Bronx Community Board 9 held a public hearing on this application (C 160160 PQX) on June 21, 2018, and on the same date, by a vote of 20 in favor, none opposed, and with none abstaining, the board adopted a resolution recommending approval of the application.

### **Borough President Recommendation**

The Bronx Borough President held a public hearing on this application (C 160160 PQX) on July 17, 2018 and issued a recommendation approving the application on July 25, 2018.

### **City Planning Commission Public Hearing**

On July 25, 2018 (Calendar No. 4), the City Planning Commission scheduled August 8, 2018 for a public hearing on this application (C 160160 PQX). The hearing was duly held on August 8, 2018 (Calendar No. 31). One speaker testified in favor of the application.

A representative from ACS spoke in favor of the application, providing information on the day care center's role as an affordable day care provider to low-income families in the community. The representative stated that the facility is contracted by ACS to serve up to 87 pre-school children and is currently at 75 percent of enrollment.

There were no other speakers, and the hearing was closed.

### **CONSIDERATION**

The Commission believes that the acquisition of City-owned property located at 1880 Watson Avenue (Block 3732, Lot 39) for continued use as a day care center is appropriate.

A day care center has occupied this space continuously since 1975, serving the community by providing needed services. There are currently 65 children enrolled in the center's program through its ACS contract. The center provides daily meal service and supervised play time, and educates the children as part of the Early Learn and Universal Pre-K programs. It gives parents of enrolled children time to work, attend school, or acquire vocational training. The use is permitted as-of-right in the R5 zoning district. The project area is well-served by public transportation, including the BX 38, BX 39, and BxM8 bus lines and the 6 subway line, all of which stop within three blocks of the site.

The Commission notes the importance of ensuring that the façades of these facilities are welcoming and inviting in light of their role as critical neighborhood resources. While outside the scope of the actions directly before it, the Commission encourages DCAS and ACS to pursue additional streetscape and façade improvements to improve the center's appearance, including the Watson Avenue frontage, making it a more welcoming and attractive neighborhood asset that better engages and activates the streetscape.

The Commission notes that this facility does not have a fire sprinkler system, and urges ACS to explore installing fire control sprinklers in its day care facilities as a proactive policy. The Commission also notes that the public review process for the continued use of this facility has been effective in highlighting any maintenance or repair issues that need to be addressed.

## **RESOLUTION**

**RESOLVED**, that the City Planning Commission finds that the action described herein will have no significant impact on the environment; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, by the City Planning Commission, pursuant to Sections 197-c of the New York City Charter, that this application submitted by the Administration for Children’s Services and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, pursuant to 197-c of the New York City Charter, for the acquisition of property located at 1880 Watson Avenue (Block 3732, Lot 39) for continued use as a child care center, is approved for a period of ten years, with renewal options, or without time limitation if acquired in fee.

The above resolution (C 160160 PQX), duly adopted by the City Planning Commission on September 5, 2018 (Calendar No. 5 ), 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.

**MARISA LAGO**, *Chair*

**KENNETH J. KNUCKLES, Esq.**, *Vice Chairman*

**ALLEN P. CAPPELLI, Esq., ALFRED C. CERULLO, III,**

**JOSEPH I. DOUEK, RICHARD W. EADDY, CHERYL COHEN EFFRON,**

**HOPE KNIGHT, ANNA HAYES LEVIN, ORLANDO MARIN, LARISA ORTIZ,**

*Commissioners*

Application #: **C160160 PQX**

Project Name: **Watson Avenue Early Childhood Ctr.**

CEQR Number: Type II

Borough(s): Bronx

Community District Number(s): 9

Please use the above application number on all correspondence concerning this application

**SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS**

- Complete this form and return to the Department of City Planning by one of the following options:
  - EMAIL (recommended):** Send email to [CalendarOffice@planning.nyc.gov](mailto:CalendarOffice@planning.nyc.gov) and include the following subject line: (CB or BP) Recommendation + (6-digit application number), e.g., "CB Recommendation #C100000ZSQ"
  - MAIL:** Calendar Information Office, City Planning Commission, 120 Broadway, 31<sup>st</sup> Floor, New York, NY 10271
  - FAX:** to (212) 720-3488 and note "Attention of the Calendar Office"
- Send one copy of the completed form with any attachments to the applicant's representative at the address listed below, one copy to the Borough President, and one copy to the Borough Board, when applicable.

*Docket Description:*

**IN THE MATTER OF** an application submitted by the Administration for Children's Services 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 1880 Watson Avenue (Block 3732, Lot 39) for continued use as a child care facility.

<b>Applicant(s):</b> Administration for Children's Services 150 William Street, 14th Floor New York, NY 10038		<b>Applicant's Representative:</b> Mitch Gipson 212-341-4810	
<b>Recommendation submitted by:</b> Bronx Community Board 9			
<b>Date of public hearing:</b> 06/21/18		<b>Location:</b> 1930 Randall Ave, Bronx NY 10473	
<b>Was a quorum present?</b> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>		<small>A public hearing requires a quorum of 20% of the appointed members of the board, but in no event fewer than seven such members.</small>	
<b>Date of Vote:</b> 06/21/18		<b>Location:</b> KIPS BAY BOYS and GIRLS CLUB 1936 Randall Ave, Bronx NY 10473	
<b>RECOMMENDATION</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approve <input type="checkbox"/> Disapprove <input type="checkbox"/> Approve With Modifications/Conditions <input type="checkbox"/> Disapprove With Modifications/Conditions			
<b>Please attach any further explanation of the recommendation on additional sheets, as necessary.</b>			
<b>Voting</b> # In Favor: 20    # Against: 0    # Abstaining: 0    Total members appointed to the board: 25			
<b>Name of CB/BB officer completing this form</b> DISTRICT MANAGER WILLIAM RIVERA		<b>Title</b> District MANAGER	<b>Date</b> 06/27/18



**WILLIAM RIVERA**  
District Manager  
Bronx CB9  
City of New York

**BOROUGH PRESIDENT  
RECOMMENDATION**

**CITY PLANNING COMMISSION  
22 Reade Street, New York, NY 10007  
Fax # (212)720-3356**

**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 representative as indicated on the Notice of Certification.

**APPLICATION # C 160160 PQX**

**DOCKET DESCRIPTION**

**PLEASE SEE ATTACHMENT FOR DOCKET DESCRIPTION**

**COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 9**

**BOROUGH: BRONX**

**RECOMMENDATION**

- APPROVE**
- APPROVE WITH MODIFICATIONS/CONDITIONS (List below)**
- DISAPPROVE**

**EXPLANATION OF RECOMMENDATION-MODIFICATION/CONDITIONS (Attach additional sheets if necessary)**

**PLEASE SEE ATTACHMENT FOR THE BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION**

  
BOROUGH PRESIDENT

  
DATE

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**BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION  
ULURP APPLICATION C160160 PQX  
Watson Avenue Early Childhood Center**

**DOCKET DESCRIPTION**

**IN THE MATTER OF AN** application submitted by the Administration for Children Services (ACS) 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 1880 Watson Avenue (block 3732, Lot 39) for continued use as a child care facility.

**BACKGROUND**

Approval of this application will facilitate a lease renewal for property located at 1880 Watson Avenue, (Block 3732, Lot 39). This two-story story building occupies the southeast corner of Watson Avenue and Underhill Avenue, in Bronx Community District #9, in a R5 zone. It includes 30,740 square feet and has been serving the surrounding community as a child day care center since 1975.

The child day care center is operated by the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) and provides daily activities for up to 171 children ages 3 to 4. The center's program commences at 8:00 a.m. and concludes at 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Children are taken to and from the center by parents. A program staff includes 53 professional and paraprofessional employees, as well as a support staff supplemented by volunteers and interns. The day's programming includes:

- Breakfast, lunch and a mid-afternoon snack each day
- Supervised playtime composed of both indoor and outdoor recreational activities.
- Educational programming specifically designed to three and four year old toddlers.

The child care center occupies the entire two-story building, including a lower rooftop play area, and an upper roof top play area, for a total of 19,670 square feet of interior space and approximately 11,070 square feet of rooftop play area. The first floor includes five pre-school classrooms, three for 3 year old children, one for 4 year olds, and a fifth one for a mix of 3 and 4 year olds. It also has administrative offices, a staff lounge, two kitchens, and bathroom facilities. The second floor also has five pre-school classrooms, two for 3 year old children and three for 4 year old children, and the fifth one for both 3 to 4 year olds.

The surrounding community is typified by three-and four-story attached houses and small apartment buildings. Retail activity can be found one block south along Bruckner Boulevard and three blocks north of the child care center on Westchester Avenue. A junior high school is located two blocks east of the child care center, along Watson Avenue between Virginia Avenue and Pugsley Avenue.

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Subway service is available within a three block radius via the 6 train station at Parkchester Avenue. It is also accessible by the Bx36, Bx39, BxM8, and Bx5 buses with stops within three blocks of the facility.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND ULURP CERTIFICATION**

The application has been reviewed and has been determined that it is a type II action pursuant to 6 NYCRR Part 617.5(c)(26) and as such does not require CEQR review. The City Planning Commission certified this application as complete on April 23, 2018.

#### **COMMUNITY BOARD PUBLIC HEARING**

Bronx Community District #9 held a public hearing on this application on June 21, 2018. A unanimous vote recommending approval of this application was 20 in favor, zero opposed and zero abstaining..

#### **BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S PUBLIC HEARING**

The Bronx Borough President convened a meeting on this application of July 17, 2018. A representative was present and spoke in favor of this application. There being no other members of the public present, the hearing was closed.

#### **BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION**

Child day care facilities are an essential service every community requires. Such facilities are beneficial to children, parents, and the extended community. For children, they provide a space for social, emotional, physical and cognitive growth. They also provide parents opportunities for personal growth, providing them with time to work, attend school acquire vocational training.

As I review this application I am mindful of the fact that the building in which this facility is located provides space for the many functions it must satisfy as a daycare center. I am however increasingly aware that this facility, like so many others in The Bronx, are located in buildings that lack ample windows for light inside, and therefore appear more like modified industrial buildings on the outside. Perhaps considered an advantage in years past, I believe today these buildings must let the sunshine in. How to rectify this challenge is a matter that warrants consideration between the building's private sector owner and the various city agencies that lease this building. So too is the inclusion of fire retardant sprinkler systems that may save the lives of those who work and attend programs in this building. Over time we have come to better appreciate the importance of building design, most notably how buildings can best safely serve those who use it.

I recommend approval of this application.