

Queens Borough President Recommendation

APPLICATION: ULURP #160102 ZRQ

COMMUNITY BOARD: Q02

DOCKET DESCRIPTION

IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by Sunnyside-Barnett Associates LLC pursuant to Section 201 of the NYC Charter, for an amendment of the NYC Zoning Resolution, to establish that R6 districts in Mandatory Inclusionary Housing areas are allowed a maximum FAR of 3.6, to establish Mixed-Use District MX 17 (M1-1/R6) and to modify height and setback regulations in MX-17 (M1-1/R6) in Community District 2. (related applications ULURP #s 160101 ZRQ, 160103 ZMQ)

PUBLIC HEARING

A Public Hearing was held in the Borough President's Conference Room at 120-55 Queens Boulevard on Thursday, June 23, 2016, 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 two (2) speakers against with one (1) in favor. 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:

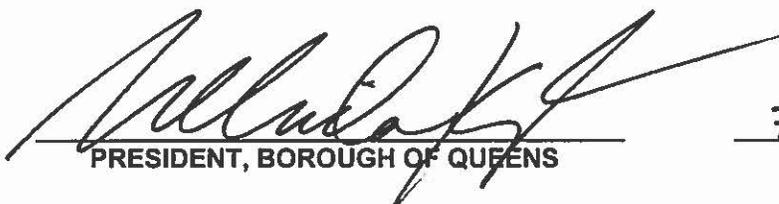
- The applicant is proposing a zoning text amendment that would establish the maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 3.6 for R6 districts within Mandatory Inclusionary Housing Areas, establish a new Mixed-Use District MX 17 (M1-1/R6) and modify height and setback regulations in the Mixed-Use District MX 17 (M1-1/R6). This application and the other related applications under concurrent review would facilitate development of affordable housing at 50-25 Barnett Avenue;
- The project site is owned by the applicant who purchased the property in the 1950s. The site is currently in use as a public parking lot for approximately 223 vehicles. With the exception of an attendants booth the site is otherwise undeveloped;
- The applicant is proposing to develop 209 units of affordable housing. The proposed mix of housing would be forty-two units (20%) for households at 50% of Area Median Income (AMI), sixty-two units (30%) for households at 100% AMI and one hundred four units (50%) for households at 130% of AMI. One unit of housing is set aside for the superintendent of the building;
- The buildings would be 7-8 stories tall on Barnett Avenue and 9-10 stories tall to the rear of the site towards the railroad right-of-way. The site would include an approximately 4,000 sf community space, 200 attended at-grade parking space with any unused spots made available to the public, and new 15 feet wide sidewalks along Barnett Avenue with a double row of trees and landscaping. The applicant has committed to attaining sustainability standards set by Enterprise Green Communities and NYSERDA;
- The project site is located on the north side of Barnett Avenue between 50th and 52nd Streets. The north side of the site is bordered by the right-of-way for the Long Island Rail Road. The properties to the east of the site are occupied by 1- to 3-story commercial buildings. The properties to the west of the site are used for bus storage and open parking. The properties south of Barnett Avenue are primarily developed with a variety of residential building types ranging from one- and two family houses, walkup apartment buildings and larger elevator buildings. The Phipps Sunnyside Gardens complex, owned and operated by the applicant since the 1930s, are located directly across the street from the proposed project site are buildings four- to six-stories tall built around interior courtyards. Taller six- to eleven-story buildings are located a few blocks away to the southeast;
- Community Board 2 (CB2) conditionally disapproved this application by a vote of thirty-eight (38) against with one (1) in favor and one (1) abstaining at a public meeting held on June 2, 2016. CB2's conditions were as follows: the inclusion of more and deeper affordability bands that would make residents earning 50% and 100% of AMI eligible for units; reduction of the size and scale of the proposed building in the context of the surrounding buildings; inclusion of a larger community facility space to allow more needed community services in addition to the proposed universal pre-k possibly in coordination with reputable and qualified not-for-profit service providers; full environmental remediation of the site; replacement of lost parking; applicant commitment to work with elected officials and CB2 on sidewalk improvements for Barnett Avenue, siting and construction of a community middle school and infrastructure improvements; and commitment to use union labor.

RECOMMENDATION

- The applicant, Phipps Houses has a long standing record as a not-for-profit developer, owner and manager of affordable housing. Phipps has created over 8,000 units of affordable housing for low to moderate income families citywide. In addition to affordable housing, Phipps provides programs and services in support of children, individuals and families;
- The Furman Center's most recent *State of New York City's Housing and Neighborhoods in 2015* study shows that the distribution of household income levels (in 2015 dollars) in Queens Community District 2 are: 13% \$20,000 or less; 20% \$20,000 to \$40,000; 19% \$40,000 to \$60,000; 23% \$60,000 to \$100,000; 21% \$100,000 to \$250,000 and 3% \$250,000 or more. The study also shows that median rental rates in all categories have increased from 2010 to 2014 at a higher rate than the NYC rates overall;
- Over the last 15 years, Community District 2 at large has experienced transformative changes due to rapid development of many medium to high rise developments with more coming online. The increased numbers of residents, mass transit users, vehicular traffic and school age children are stretching the area's limits on infrastructure and services. These are reflected in service delays, shortages of school seats, lack of open space and traffic congestion;

Based on the above consideration, I hereby recommend disapproval of this application in its present form unless the following conditions are met:

- While taller buildings do exist around the general neighborhood, the areas immediately around the project site are still lower in density and height. The building height of the project should be lowered to stay within the context of the buildings immediately around it;
- Deepen the band of affordability to allow more area residents an opportunity to remain in their neighborhood. As currently proposed with 50% of units geared towards households at 130% AMI, as many as 75% of Community District 2 residents do not earn enough or are able to afford the proposed new moderate income housing. The mix of affordability for this project should be adjusted to reflect the incomes earned by the majority of area residents;
- Inclusion of a larger community facility space to accommodate a wider range of services and constituency. Sunnyside has a growing school age and senior population. Coordination with established, proven well-operated not-for-profit service providers and a larger community facility space are needed to provide more programs and services for those growing populations;
- Infrastructure improvements are needed to address the issues currently faced in Sunnyside and Community District 2. Such improvements would include: assessment of the overall condition of Barnett Avenue, particularly the sidewalk, should be assessed and a funded plan for improvements should be implemented; a middle school site should be identified and constructed to relieve the shortage of seats; and improvements must be identified and implemented to address transportation delays and congestion;
- To assure the quality, durability and safety of construction, the workers for this project should be highly skilled and trained. The construction and trade unions are very experienced in all types of building and should be utilized for development, operation and maintenance of this project.



PRESIDENT, BOROUGH OF QUEENS

7/5/16

DATE