



**City of New York  
Community Board #1, Queens**

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June 12, 2019

Office of the Chairperson

JUN 18 2019

Honorable Marisa Lago, Chair  
City Planning Commission  
120 Broadway, 31<sup>st</sup> Floor  
New York, New York 10271

RE: **Vernon Boulevard/Broadway Rezoning 32-01 Vernon  
Boulevard**

**C100421 ZMQ** Application to rezone one block (Block 315,  
Lot 1) bounded by Vernon Boulevard, Broadway, 11<sup>th</sup> Street,  
10<sup>th</sup> Street and 33<sup>rd</sup> Road from R5 to R6B and R7X/C1-3;

**N190151 ZRQ** Application to amend Appendix F of the  
Zoning Resolution to designate the rezoning area as an  
Inclusionary Housing Designated Area and Mandatory  
Inclusionary Housing Area under Option 1 and Option 2; and

**C190386 ZSQ** Application for the grant of a CPC Special  
Permit (ZR 74-743) for bulk modifications within a Large  
Scale General Development ("LSGD") plan, subject to the  
conditions of CEQR Declaration E-518.

Dear Chair Lago,

Community Board 1 Queens (CB1Q) held its duly advertised public hearing for the referenced applications on May 23, 2019. Following the public hearing and, after a report from the Board's Land Use and Zoning Committee, the Board voted to approve the applications with 22 in favor, 2 opposed and 2 not voting for cause. A quorum was present.

**Proposed Action**

The one-block area to be rezoned is bounded by Vernon Boulevard, Broadway, 11<sup>th</sup> Street, 33<sup>rd</sup> Road and 10<sup>th</sup> Street, close to the East River waterfront. Located in the mixed-use neighborhood of Ravenswood, the 1.77-acre site is zoned R5 and is improved with a one-story warehouse and used for open construction vehicle storage. Both uses are non-conforming under the existing R5 zoning.

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The proposed R6B and R7X/C1-3 zoning districts along with the Large Scale General Development plan will facilitate construction of three mixed-use buildings (5 stories, 9 stories and 14 stories) with approximately 351 total dwelling units (325,965 SF) including 113 income-restricted, a 166-space below-grade parking garage, ground floor commercial (11,236 SF) and community facility areas (6,881 SF), and landscaped public and private open spaces (16,546 SF).

### **Community Review and Comments**

The Applicant's representative presented the project to the Land Use Committee on April 3, 2019 and responded to committee comments on May 1, 2019 after City Planning certified the application on April 22<sup>nd</sup>. The main concerns raised during project review related to the limited affordability levels of Option 2 for area residents and the disproportionate number of studio and one-bedroom units proposed in the development.

The proposed eligible income levels were higher than the median household income for 14 CD1 census tracts within a half-mile radius of the project (\$49,861 ACS 2012-2016) and priced out many area residents, making them ineligible to participate in the selection process. It was noted that any income tier above 80% AMI would not be affordable to area residents. Proposed rents were above the area median where 64.5% of the households in the same census tracts are already rent burdened, paying more than 35% of household income.

Additional concerns included maintenance, accessibility, operation and signage for the public open space, provision of transport to area transit hubs including Astoria Ferry, and subway stations, provision of off-street loading areas for residential and commercial deliveries, reasonable commercial rents to incentivize small, local businesses, building shadows and comparability of building fixtures and amenities for both market and MIH units.

### **Applicant's responses after certification:**

**Affordability and Rents:** The proposed project originally projected Option 2 MIH income bands and rents using an avg. 80% of AMI (2019). After certification, the Applicant stated ownership would select a blend of income bands: Option 1 in Buildings A and B: 25% at an average of 60% AMI with income tiers broken down at 40%-50%-80% AMI; and Option 2 in Building C: 30% at an average of 80% AMI with income tiers broken down at 60%-80%-100%.

Although this approach will reduce the total number of market and affordable units in the project, using these income bands will bring rents and income eligibility limits closer to the actual economic profile of the local neighborhood. The Land Use Committee proposed that the owners might maintain the original number of MIH apartments by setting aside 30% of floor area for Option 1 units instead of the 25% MIH minimum requirement.

### **Apartment Configuration:**

The owners indicated they would increase the number of larger apartments in the development (108 two-bedroom and 15 three-bedroom units). However, the total number of units is reduced to 330 apartments (91 MIH) instead of 351 (113 MIH). The development is still skewed toward single and two-person households (63% of units) even with the increase of larger units to 108 two-bedroom (30 MIH) and five three-bedroom (3 MIH) units (37.5%).

### **Open space and Transportation:**

Access, maintenance, signage and hours of operation of the public open space are to be governed by the city's POPS regulations and included in the Large Scale Development Plan.

The applicant will look into providing or coordinating transport service with other projects between the new development and mass transit links.

**CB Public Hearing**

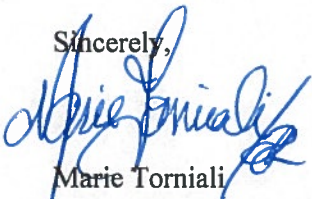
On May 23, 2019, the Applicant's representatives gave an overview of the zoning actions and the proposed development at the Board's public hearing. They reviewed the modifications made to the MIH income bands and rents and answered questions from Board members concerning potential flooding in the area and the EAS findings as well as comments similar to those previously noted during project review.

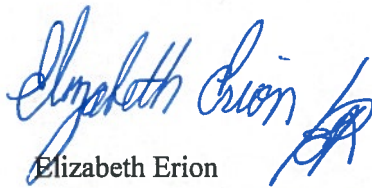
There were no speakers who testified either in support or opposition. CB1Q received an unsigned copy of testimony from an SEIU 32BJ representative requesting the Board recommend the applicant commit to providing prevailing wage building service jobs.

The Board appreciates the LSGD approach to planning this development. The graduated building heights are sensitive to the surrounding low-scale character and limit the project's impacts on nearby open spaces and cultural uses. The exterior elements proposed for the façade give the project interest and visually reduce the mass of the buildings. To some, however, a fourteen-story building, though well designed, remains a concern as it sets a precedent for new development and higher densities with consequent economic changes in this part of Astoria/Ravenswood.

The Board notes the efforts of the Applicant to make to the project more affordable and strongly urges the Option changes be included in any subsequent agreements and restrictive declaration with City Planning and HPD.

Sincerely,

  
Marie Torniali  
Chairperson

  
Elizabeth Erion  
Co-Chair, Land Use and Zoning Committee