



CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

March 30, 2005/Calendar No. 16

C 040404 PSK

IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by the Fire Department and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services pursuant to Section 197-c of the New York City Charter, for site selection of property located at 580-582 Knickerbocker Avenue (Block 3343, part of lot 1), Borough of Brooklyn, Community District 4, for use as a fire station.

This application (C 040404 PSK) was filed on April 15, 2004 by the Fire Department(FDNY) and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) for site selection of property located at 580-582 Knickerbocker Avenue (Block 3343, part of lot 1), Borough of Brooklyn, Community District 4, for use as a fire station.

RELATED ACTION:

C 040405 ZSK Special permit pursuant to Section 74-67 of the New York City Zoning Resolution to allow a fire station in a residential district.

BACKGROUND

The Fire Department (FDNY) and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) are requesting site selection approval of a city-owned property located at 580-582 Knickerbocker Avenue (Block 3343, part of Lot 1) to facilitate the construction of a firehouse for Engine Company 277 and Ladder Company 112. The new firehouse would be constructed on the subject lot (Block 3343, part of Lot 1) and an adjacent city-owned lot (Block 3343, Lot 29), which is currently occupied by the existing firehouse for Engine 277.

The site for the new firehouse is located along the south side of Knickerbocker Avenue, between

Palmetto Street and Gates Avenue, in the Bushwick neighborhood in Brooklyn in an R6 zoning district. The lot that is the subject of this application (Block 3343, part of Lot 1) is an approximately 2,500 square parcel that was recently acquired by FDNY from the Department of Education, and which is currently paved but unimproved.

FDNY will demolish the existing firehouse and the construct a new 3 story, 10,775 square foot firehouse on the existing site and the subject 2,500 square foot parcel (Block 3343, part of lot 1). The existing firehouse is in disrepair and is too small to accommodate two companies. The consolidation of the two fire companies at a single facility would provide for more efficient service. Currently, Engine 277 and Ladder 112 have been relocated approximately three quarters of a mile to the southwest of the site to the facilities of Engine 222 at 32 Ralph Avenue pending completion of the new firehouse.

The other uses on the block are Intermediate School 291, Roland Hayes School, and the school's playground. The area surrounding the project site is predominantly residential and institutional, comprised almost exclusively of two and three story houses and three to four story apartment buildings. Some of the community facility uses in the area include St. Paul's Lutheran Church east of the site and Bushwick High School two blocks northeast of the site.

A firehouse is a commercial use (Use Group 6) and is not permitted in an R6 district except by a special permit pursuant to Section 74 67 of the Zoning Resolution. Consequently FDNY has filed the related application (C 040405 ZSK) for a special permit to allow the new firehouse on Block

3343, lots 29 and part of lot 1, in the R6 district. In addition, the special permit will allow the firehouse to exceed the permitted residential floor area ratio and maximum lot coverage permitted by Section 24-11 and to modify the open space requirements of Section 23-14.

The proposed facility would also not comply with the following zoning regulations: side yard requirements pursuant to Section 24 35; and inner courtyard requirements pursuant to Section 24 64 In this instance, the City is exercising its option not to be subject to its zoning requirements when performing a governmental function.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This application (C 040404 PSK), in conjunction with the applications for the related action (C 040405 ZSK) 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 New York City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Rules of Procedure of 1991 and Executive Order No. 91 of 1977. The designated CEQR number is 04FDO001K. The lead agency is the Fire Department.

After a study of the potential environmental impacts of the proposed action, a negative declaration was issued on December 8, 2003.

UNIFORM LAND USE REVIEW

This application (C 040404 PSK), along with the application for the related action (C 040405 ZSK), was certified as complete by the Department of City Planning on December 20, 2004, and was duly referred to Community Board 4 and the Borough President of Brooklyn in accordance with Article 3 of the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) rules.

Community Board Public Hearing

Community Board 3 held a public hearing on this application(C 040404 PSK) along with the related application (C 0040405 ZSK) on January 19, 2005 and on that date, by a vote of 25 to 0 with 0 abstentions, adopted a resolution recommending approval of these applications.

Borough President Recommendation

This application (C 040404 PSK) along with the related application (C 040405 ZSK) was considered by the Borough President of Brooklyn, who issued a recommendation approving these applications on February 25, 2005 with the following condition:

“that the Fire Department commit, in consultation with Community Board 4, to replace the fencing and plant perimeter street trees.”

City Planning Commission Public Hearing

On February 16, 2005 (Calendar No 2), the City Planning Commission scheduled March 2, 2005, for a public hearing on this application (C 040404 PSK). The hearing was duly held on March 2, 2005 (Calendar No. 5), in conjunction with the hearing for the related action (C 040405 ZSK). There was one speaker in favor and none in opposition.

A representative of the Fire Department who spoke in favor of the application. There were no other speakers and the hearing was closed.

CONSIDERATION

The Commission believes that the application for site selection and for the grant of a special permit to facilitate the construction of a 3-story approximately 10,755 square-foot fire station on a zoning lot located at 580-582 Knickerbocker Avenue (Block 3343, Lot 29 and part of Lot 1), Borough of Brooklyn, Community District 4, is appropriate.

The proposed site selection and special permit would permit the construction of a necessary, modern fire facility serving a densely-populated, residential neighborhood. The current quarters of Engine 277 are in severe disrepair and can no longer be used, however the location of the facility, which has been in place for more than 90 years, continues to be the best for serving the community. The Fire Department's plan to construct a double-company firehouse at this site, rather than investing in major renovations to a single-company firehouse, would create a modernized facility that would allow Engine 277 and Ladder 112 to efficiently perform their duties, as well as conform to the NYC Fire Department's current program requirements for a double-company firehouse. Since the fire station is not permitted in a residential district, the applicant is also concurrently seeking a special permit (C 040405 ZSK) pursuant to Section 74-67 to allow a fire station in a residential district.

The site is centrally located within the northern portion of the 37th Battalion, a two and a half square mile area generally bounded by Trinity Cemetery and the Cemetery of the Evergreens to the east, Fulton Street to the south, Sumner Avenue and Stanhope Street to the west, and Myrtle and Knickerbocker Avenues and Kosciusko Street to the north for which Engine 277 and Ladder 112 serve as primary responding companies, along a major avenue, Knickerbocker Avenue. The decision to construct an expanded fire facility for Engine 277 and Ladder 112 at 580 Knickerbocker Avenue was primarily based on the lack of suitably sized replacement sites within the affected community district. Typical lots found in this area are fully developed with small residential uses, commercial buildings, or large institutional uses and low-income housing projects. The FDNY has done extensive surveys in the surrounding area, and has determined that there are no available city-owned parcels or other available vacant sites which could potentially accommodate a new, double-company fire facility as-of-right within a quarter mile radius of the project site without serious difficulties.

The proposed site will minimize the movement of fire apparatuses through local streets in residential areas to the greatest extent possible given its close proximity and access to Myrtle, Central, Gates and Bushwick Avenues, as well as Broadway which are wide, principle thoroughfares. The proposed site is located on the south side of Knickerbocker Avenue, a major one-way westbound roadway between Palmetto Street and Gates Avenue. Knickerbocker Avenue provides direct access to Myrtle and Gates Avenues, which are both principle two-way roadways. Myrtle Avenue provides east-west access through the fire station's catchment area, while Gates Avenue allows for north- and south-bound travel.

With regard to the Borough President's recommendation about the accessory parking, the Commission notes that that parcel is not a subject of this application. However, the Commission concurs that improvements to the parking lot would be an asset to the community. In a letter dated March 23, 2005, the Fire Department states that "while we would like to renovate this area if possible, we cannot commit to doing so at this time because of the project's projected costs." FDNY further states, "if funds are not available as the new firehouse moves to completion we may seek the assistance of outside sources (e.g., elected officials) to fund this renovation." The Commission encourages the Fire Department to continue to work with the Community Board and the Borough President to address this issue.

The project was not included in the Citywide Statement of Needs, however, a letter pursuant to Section 204g of the New York City Charter was sent to the Borough President of Brooklyn.

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 Section 197-c of the New York City Charter, that based on the environmental determination and consideration described in this report, the application (C 040404 PSK) of the Fire Department and the Department of Citywide

Administrative Services for site selection of property located at 580-582 Knickerbocker Avenue (Block 3343, part of lot 1), Borough of Brooklyn, for use as a fire station, is approved.

The above resolution, duly adopted by the City Planning Commission on March 30, 2005 (Calendar No. 16), is filed with the Office of the Speaker, City Council, and the Borough President of Brooklyn in accordance with the requirements of Section 197-d of the New York City Charter.

AMANDA M. BURDEN, AICP, Chair

KENNETH J. KNUCKLES, Esq., Vice Chairman

ANGELA M. BATTAGLIA, IRWIN G. CANTOR, P.E., ANGELA M. CAVALUZZI, R.A.,

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