



CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

August 13, 2003 Calendar No. 26

C 030329 PCX

IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by the Bronx Museum of the Arts, the Department of Cultural Affairs and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, pursuant to Section 197-c of the New York City Charter, for the site selection and acquisition of property located at 1044-1048 Grand Concourse and 59 Carroll Place (Block 2462, Lots 6, 7, 8, and 22), for an expansion of a museum. Borough of the Bronx, Community District 4.

The application for site selection and acquisition of property located at 1044-1048 Grand Concourse and 59 Carroll Place (Block 2462, Lots 6, 7, 8, and 22) was submitted by the Bronx Museum of the Arts, the Department of Cultural Affairs and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services on February 14, 2003. Approval of this application will facilitate the expansion of the Bronx Museum through the construction of a three-story, 16,700 square foot building fronting on the Grand Concourse.

BACKGROUND

The proposed site consists of three parcels on the east side of the Grand Concourse and one parcel on the west side of Carroll Place between E. 165th St. and E. 166th St. (Block 2462, city owned lots 6, and 7 and museum owned lots 8 and 22). These lots are currently undeveloped and adjacent to the existing Bronx Museum facility. The Bronx Museum has existed in its current facility at the corner of E. 165th St. and the Grand Concourse since 1982. The facility currently provides 34,000 sq. ft. of space, which includes galleries, classrooms, fine art storage area and an atrium entrance with an elevator. The Museum accommodates about 30,000 visitors per year. The proposed improvements would help the Museum accommodate the projected 50,000 visitors per year by 2004.

The proposed expansion of the Bronx Museum consists of a three story building fronting on the Grand Concourse, with an outdoor terrace. Presently, the Bronx Museum occupies 34,000 sq. ft. of cultural resource space. The proposed expansion would result in the addition of 16,700 sq. ft for a total of 50,700 sq. ft. There will be new gallery/exhibit space, additional gallery/public

programming space, administrative office space, security-control room and an eatery/vending area. The museum's main entrance, lobby, visitors reception area and service entrance would be relocated in the new structure. The expansion would allow the Bronx Museum to display more of the 800 plus pieces of art that it currently possesses. Most of these pieces are now in storage, due to space limitations.

The land uses in the area consist of a mix of residential and commercial buildings. There are also some community facilities in the area including the Concourse Rehabilitation and Nursing Center located on the same block as the museum. The surrounding buildings are typical of the Grand Concourse area, five-story and six-story residential buildings. Commercial uses in the area are primarily ground floor retail establishments in residential buildings, located within the commercial overlay along E. 165th Street. The project site is zoned R8, which allows an FAR of 6.5 for a community facility and is within the Special Grand Concourse Preservation District. This special district aims to preserve the unique physical characteristics of the Grand Concourse by stipulating special sign, bulk, tree planting and use regulations.

The expansion of the Bronx Museum is consistent with the Bronx Civic Center Plan. This is a plan to develop and improve the area around the Grand Concourse and E. 161st Street, which includes the new Bronx Criminal Court Complex four blocks south on E. 161st Street and the redevelopment of Lou Gerrick Plaza at the Corner of E. 161st Street and the Grand Concourse.

The Bronx Museum is located two blocks south of the E. 167th Street subway station of the D train and is served by Bx 1 and Bx 2 buses. Both buses run north on the Grand Concourse and terminate in Kingsbridge. The Bx 1 runs south on the Grand Concourse to Hostos Community College and the Bx 2 runs east on E. 165th Street and south on Melrose Avenue to the Hub.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This application (C 030329 PCX), 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 (CEQR) Rules of Procedure of 1991 and Executive Order No. 91 of 1977. The designated CEQR number is 03DCLA001X. The lead agency is the Department of Cultural Affairs

After a study of the potential environmental impacts of the proposed action, a negative declaration was issued on March 26, 2003.

UNIFORM LAND USE REVIEW

This application (C 030329 PCX) was certified as complete by the Department of City Planning on April 21, 2003, and was duly referred to Community Board 4 and the Borough President, in accordance with Article 3 of the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) rules.

Community Board Public Hearing

Community Board 4 held a public hearing on this application on May 27, 2003 and on that date, by a vote of 30 to 0 with 0 abstentions, adopted a resolution recommending approval of the applications.

Borough President Recommendation

This application was considered by the Borough President who issued a recommendation approving the application on June 4, 2003, subject to the following conditions:

1. Construction will not occur prior to 7:00 a.m. or beyond 5:00 p.m.
2. The design must provide space for foundation plantings on the Grand Concourse.
3. No chain-link fencing will be used in locations visible to the public
4. Street trees will be planted wherever appropriate.

In addition, the museum must commit to maintaining undeveloped property that it owns.

City Planning Commission Public Hearing

On June 18, 2003 (Calendar No. 1), the City Planning Commission scheduled July 2, 2003 for a public hearing on this application (C 030329 PCX). The hearing was duly held on July 2, 2003 (Calendar No. 6). There were two speakers in favor of the application and none in opposition.

Those speaking in favor of the applications were representatives of the Bronx Museum and the project's architect. The architect described the design of the expansion. The representative of the Bronx Museum provided details of the financing and needs of the museum.

There were no other speakers and the hearing was closed.

CONSIDERATION

The City Planning Commission believes that the application of the Bronx Museum, the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) and the Department of Citywide Administration Services (DCAS) for site selection and acquisition of property located at 1044-1048 Grand Concourse and 59 Carroll Place (Block 2462, Lots 6, 7, 8, and 22) for the expansion of the Bronx Museum, is appropriate.

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 the Bronx.

The Commission recognizes that the expansion of the Bronx Museum will give the museum a new identity and greater presence in the community and that its current facility at the corner of E. 165th St. and the Grand Concourse is smaller than comparable institutions of its stature. The expansion will allow the museum to **display more of the 800 plus pieces of art that it possesses. Most of these pieces are now in storage, due to space limitations.** The facility currently provides 34,000 sq. ft. of space, which includes galleries, classrooms, fine art storage area and an atrium entrance with an elevator. The Museum accommodates about 30,000 visitors per year. The proposed improvements will help the Museum accommodate the projected 50,000 visitors per

year by 2004. The Commission notes that the expansion of the Bronx Museum is consistent with the surrounding land uses and zoning.

The Commission concurs with the Borough President's conditions, regarding the planting of trees where appropriate, the use of appropriate fencing and design for greenery on the Grand Concourse. The condition regarding construction periods is beyond the purview of the Commission. The Bronx Museum stated at the public hearing that they would comply with the Borough President's conditions.

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 030329 PCX) submitted by the Bronx Museum of the Arts, the Department of Cultural Affairs and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, pursuant to Section 197-c of the New York City Charter, for the site selection and acquisition of property located at 1044-1048 Grand Concourse and 59 Carroll Place (Block 2462, Lots 6, 7, 8, and 22), is approved for an expansion of a museum. Borough of the Bronx, Community District 4.

The above resolution, duly adopted by the City Planning Commission on August 13, 2003 (Calendar No. 6), is filed with the Office of the Speaker, City Council, and the Borough President of the Bronx, 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

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