



CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

April 9, 2007/Calendar No. 1

C 070134 PPK

IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS), pursuant to Section 197-c of the New York City Charter, for the disposition of one (1) City-owned property located at 299 DeGraw Street (Block 414, lot 61), Borough of Brooklyn, Community District 6, pursuant to zoning.

* Section 197-d,b(2) eligible

The application for a disposition of one city owned property was filed by the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS), Division of Real Estate Services (DRES) on October 4, 2006.

BACKGROUND

The Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS), Division of Real Estate Services (DRES) submitted an application for the disposition of one (1) City-owned property, located at 299 DeGraw Street between Court and Smith streets. The subject property is located in the Cobble Hill neighborhood of Community District 6, Brooklyn. The lot is 2,500 square feet and is occupied by a vacant, former firehouse for Engine Company 204 that closed in May 2003 due to budgetary reasons. The building is two stories with 4,250 square feet of floor area. It is in a R6 district and a small portion of the lot is within a C1-3 commercial overlay.

The workload of this former firehouse was absorbed by several nearby firehouses, including Engine 226 at 409 State Street, Engine 224 at 279 Hicks Street, Engine 202 at 31 Richards

Street, Engine 279 at 252 Lorraine Street, and Engine 239 at 395 Fourth Avenue.

DeGraw Street is a residential street lined with primarily three- and four-story rowhouses on both north and south sides of the street, and lot 61 is situated between two three-story residential buildings. Land uses in the areas surrounding the site are similarly residential, including the Cobble Hill Historic District to the northwest of the site across Court Street. Lot 61 is located just off of Court Street, a local retail corridor, and Smith Street, another local shopping street, is located at the eastern end of this block.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This application (C 070134 PPK) 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 lead agency is the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS).

This application was determined to be a Type II action which requires no further environmental review.

UNIFORM LAND USE REVIEW

This application (C 070134 PPK) was certified as complete by the Department of City Planning on November 13, 2006, and was duly referred to Community Board 6 and the Borough

President, in accordance with Article 3 of the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) rules.

Community Board Public Hearing

Community Board 6 held a public hearing on this application on January 4, 2007, and on January 10, 2007, by a vote of 35 to 0 with 0 abstentions, adopted a recommendation disapproving the application.

The Community Board recommended that:

...the City does not sell or lease or auction or in any way dispose of this property and that it be used for some fire-related activities until a full study of the future needs of our community be undertaken that will sufficiently examine 1) the current and future growth in housing in the area (including the affects of Downtown Brooklyn Rezoning and other large-scale regional planning initiatives); 2) the current and future traffic conditions in our community (including the cumulative affects of the Atlantic Yards project and other large-scale projects that have been planned for our region); and, 3) the unique need for fire protection services given the concentration of seniors in the vicinity and the aging built form of our historic Brownstone Brooklyn communities.

Borough President Recommendation

This application was considered by the Borough President who issued a recommendation disapproving the application on February 7, 2007. In his recommendation the Borough President stated that he “wants Engine Company 204 promptly returned to service.” In addition, he stated:

...pending the City’s agreement to restore service to this firehouse, the City should investigate ways in which this property can be best used. One possibility includes the reuse of this property as a temporary house for other engine companies on an as needed basis.

City Planning Commission Public Hearing

On February 7, 2007 (Calendar No. 2), the City Planning Commission scheduled February 28, 2007 for a public hearing on this application (C 070134 PPK). The hearing was duly held on February 28, 2007 (Calendar No. 22). There were eight speakers, two in favor and six in opposition.

The speakers in favor included the Deputy Commissioner of DCAS, the Fire Department's Chief of Operations (FDNY). The Deputy Commission from DCAS noted that a hold had been put on this property at the request of the Department of Housing and Preservation (HPD) which would preclude its being sold while the hold remained in effect. She also read a statement from the Deputy Mayor's Office that described establishment of a Community Steering Committee to develop plans for the site to endure that future uses fit the needs of the community in which it is located. The steering committee would include representatives of the Mayor's Office, the local City Council member, city agencies, the Borough President and the Community Board. The committee would be chaired by the Mayor's Office and Vice Chaired by the local City Council Member and would have a goal of achieving consensus on an adaptive reuse vision and disposition strategy within six months of committee establishment.

The Chief of Operations for FDNY stated that the reason for the closure of this firehouse was due to budgetary issues, and that this former firehouse was closed after a study of projected workload and response times in surrounding units. He stated that there are five fire companies

between two-thirds and nine-tenths of a mile from the subject site, that those companies have among the lowest workloads in the city and that they have safely absorbed the calls of Engine Company 204.

Those who opposed the application included the Borough President, the City Council members from the 33rd and 39th districts, a representative of the State Assembly Member for the 52nd District, a representative of Friends of Firefighters, a neighborhood organization and a community resident.

The Borough President expressed pleasure with the formation of a steering committee, but reiterated his opposition to the sale of the firehouse and asked that a new firehouse be established in the neighborhood where needed. He further stated that any reuse of the building should be responsive to the needs of the community. The City Council members supported the establishment of Community Steering Committee, but stated that increased response times in the surrounding firehouses are unacceptable for their communities, especially considering recent and future development projects in the area and the impacts they would have on population and traffic. The representative from Friends of Firefighters stated the organization's desire to be permanently housed at this location. The State Assembly member's representative asked that this former firehouse be designated as a landmark. The community resident believed there is a need for more firehouses in Brooklyn.

There were no other speakers and the hearing was closed.

CONSIDERATION

The Commission believes that the disposition of one City-owned property located at 299 DeGraw Street between Court and Smith streets (Block 414, lot 61), is appropriate.

The Commission notes that the former firehouse for Engine 204 was closed due to budgetary issues, and that this former firehouse was closed after a study of projected workload and response times in surrounding units. The Commission understands that response times have remained at acceptable levels, that there are five companies between two-thirds and nine-tenths of a mile from the subject site, that those companies have among the lowest workloads in the city, and that they have safely absorbed the calls of Engine Company 204.

The Commission further notes that HPD has requested a hold on the subject property, and that DCAS has granted the hold. This will preclude the sale of the site while the hold remains in effect.

The Commission is pleased that a steering committee has been established that includes the Mayor's office, the local Council member, the Borough President, the community board and city agencies. The committee's goal is to achieve consensus on an adaptive reuse vision and disposition strategy for the site within six months of its establishment. There have been two meetings of the steering committee and several options for reuse of the site have been suggested including housing other fire related uses, cultural uses and as space for non-profit organizations.

The Commission believes that it would be inappropriate to place any restrictions on the sale and future use of the property while the committee continues to meet and in concert with the hold on

the property placed by DCAS, the Commission is confident that an appropriate future use for the site will be found.

RESOLUTION

RESOLVED, by the City Planning Commission, pursuant to Section 197-c of the New York City Charter, that the disposition of one (1) City-owned property located at 299 DeGraw Street (Block 414, Lot 61) in the Borough of Brooklyn, Community District 6, proposed in an application by the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, dated October 4, 2006, is approved.

The above resolution (C 070134 PPK), duly adopted by the City Planning Commission, on April 9, 2007 (Calendar No. 1), 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.

AMANDA M. BURDEN, AICP, Chair

KENNETH J. KNUCKLES, Esq., Vice Chairman

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

ALFRED C. CERULLO, III, RICHARD W. EADDY, LISA A. GOMEZ,

DOLLY WILLIAMS, Commissioners

BETTY Y. CHEN, NATHAN LEVENTHAL, Commissioners, ABSTAINING