



CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

February 8, 2006 / Calendar No. 19

C 060168 HAQ

IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD):

1. pursuant to Article 16 of the General Municipal Law of New York State for:
 - (a) the designation of property located at 25-03 29th Street, (Block 839, Lot 1), as an Urban Development Action Area; and
 - (b) an Urban Development Action Area Project for such area;
 2. pursuant to Section 197-c of the New York City Charter, for the disposition of such property to a developer to be selected by HPD, Borough of Queens, Community District 1 to facilitate the development of a 15-story mixed-use building, tentatively known as HANAC Astoria Senior Residence, with approximately 184 residential units for seniors, a senior citizens center and retail space.
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Approval of three separate matters is required:

- (1) The designation of property located at 25-03 29th Street, (Block 839, Lot 1) in the Borough of Queens as an Urban Development Action Area;
- (2) An Urban Development Action Area Project for such property; and
- (3) The disposition of such property to a developer to be selected by HPD.

The application for the Urban Development Action Area designation and project approval, and the disposition of city-owned property was submitted by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development on September 29, 2005.

Approval of this application would facilitate the construction of a 15-story mixed-use senior residence with approximately 157,000 square feet of residential space, approximately 2,000 square feet of ground floor commercial space and approximately 6,000 square feet of community facility space intended for use as a senior center. The project will provide up to 184 affordable units, accessory parking for 77 vehicles and approximately 15,500 square feet of recreational

open space. The affordable housing will be developed under the Department of Housing Preservation and Development's LAMP program.

The Department of Housing Preservation and Development states in its application that:

The Disposition Area consists of one underutilized property, which tends to impair or arrest the sound development of the surrounding community, with or without tangible physical blight. Incentives are needed in order to induce the correction of these substandard, insanitary, and blighting conditions. The project activities would protect and promote health and safety and would promote sound growth and development. The proposed area is eligible to be an Urban Development Action Area and the proposed project is therefore eligible to be an Urban Development Action Area Project pursuant to Article 16 of the General Municipal Law.

BACKGROUND

The Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) seeks an Urban Development Action Area designation, project approval and disposition of city-owned property to facilitate development of a new 15-story mixed-use senior residence under HPD's Low-Income Affordable Marketplace Program (LAMP). Through this program, the residential units will be affordable to residents earning up to 60% of the area median income.

The project site is located in the northern portion of Astoria, Queens Community District 1. The parcel proposed for disposition (Block 839, Lot 1) is a 43,829 square foot municipal parking lot with a total of 134 spaces managed by the Department of Transportation. It is located on the west side of 29th Street in an R6/C1-2 zoning district between Hoyt Avenue and Astoria Boulevard, near the off-ramp to the Triborough Bridge. 29th Street is a residential street with mostly two-story detached homes and a new seven-story apartment building. Astoria Boulevard to the south and Hoyt Avenue to the north are mixed-use residential and commercial areas.

The proposed project is a fifteen story mixed-use building with approximately 157,000 square feet of residential space and 184 rental units, approximately 2,000 square feet of ground floor

commercial space and approximately 6,000 square feet of community facility space intended for use as a senior center open to members of the community. The project will also include 15,500 square feet of open space. Three recreational open space areas, a roof terrace over the first floor commercial space, a roof terrace over the fourteenth floor and an at-grade landscaped garden area would be available for use by the building's residents as well as visitors. The entrance to the senior housing is provided on Hoyt Avenue and entrances to the senior center and commercial space would be on 29th Street. Furthermore, the project would provide a total of 77 parking spaces: 41 accessory parking spaces for the residents accessed from Hoyt Avenue, and 36 parking spaces for the public accessed from Astoria Boulevard. Street trees will be planted along Hoyt Avenue, Astoria Boulevard and 29th Street to enhance and improve the surrounding streetscape. The proposed development site is 1 block away from the N and W trains on 31st Street and Astoria Boulevard.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This application (C 060168 HAQ) 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 numbers 06HPD005. The lead agency is The Department of Housing, Preservation and Development (HPD).

After a study of the potential environmental impact of the proposed action, a negative declaration was issued on September 27, 2005.

UNIFORM LAND USE REVIEW

This application (C060168 HAQ) was certified as complete by the Department of City Planning on October 17, 2005, and was duly referred to Community Board 1 and, the Borough President, in accordance with Article 3 of the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) rules.

Community Board Public Hearing

Community Board 1 held a public hearing on this application on November 15, 2005 and on that date by a vote of 26 to 1 with 2 abstentions, adopted a resolution disapproving the application with the following comments:

Community Board 1, Queens voted to disapprove the above referenced application based on the community's objection to the loss of public parking spaces at the municipal lot and the negative impact those losses will have on the commercial and residential community along Astoria Boulevard.

Borough President Recommendation

This application (C 060168 HAQ) was considered by the Borough President, who issued a recommendation approving the application on December 17, 2005 with the following conditions:

The amount of replacement public parking spaces provided should approximate the total number now available and regularly used by the general public. A verifiable utilization study should be completed to accurately identify the public parking needs.

A no-parking/no-standing zone currently exists in front of Advanced Radiological Imaging at 29-16 Astoria Boulevard to accommodate ambulances and patient loading and unloading during business hours. DOT should restudy this area and the adjoining uses to determine if the existing no-parking/no-standing zone should be expanded to accommodate additional vehicles.

City Planning Commission Public Hearing

On December 19, 2005 (Cal. No. 30), the City Planning Commission scheduled January 11, 2006 for a public hearing. The hearing was duly held on January 11, 2006 (Calendar No. 32). There were six speakers in favor of the application and two speakers in opposition.

A representative from HPD described the project and stated that the municipal lot proposed for disposition is underutilized. He gave the utilization rates and breakdown of parking spaces as follows: 38 of the spaces are for short-term parking, 66 are for long-term parking, and 30 are permit spaces. According to DOT, during peak daytime hours (10am-4pm), the short-term spaces are 40-40% full, the long-term spaces are 70-72% full, and the permit spaces are 100% full during the school year but considerably less utilized during the summer months since they are primarily used by local school teachers. Similarly, he stated that HPD's sampling of lot usage from November 2005 to January 2006 revealed a 20-40% usage of the short-term spaces. The representative concluded by saying that the site is within very close proximity to public transportation (N train is 1 block away).

A representative from HANAC Inc, the project sponsor spoke about the history of the organization and the pressing need to develop affordable senior housing in the neighborhood. He stated that Astoria has been negatively impacted by continuing shortages of affordable housing. He also described affordable senior housing as a priority for the district and said the proposed development would offer housing and support services for low to moderate income seniors earning up to 60% of the area median income and provide a new model of affordable senior housing. He continued by saying in addition to the 47 parking spaces required by zoning, an additional 30 spaces would be made available for public use.

Four senior citizens from existing HANAC senior housing developments spoke in favor of the project.

A partner/owner of an MRI imaging facility across the street from the proposed project site at 25-03 29th Street opposed the plan to develop the site for senior housing, citing the important service the municipal lot currently provides for his employees and patients. He stated that one of the major factors in opening the medical facility on Astoria Boulevard in 1984 was the proximity to the municipal parking lot. He said the medical facility currently has between 150 and 200 patient visitors per day and approximately 30-40 employees who rely on the parking lot. The partner expressed concern that the loss of the total number of spaces would prevent his elderly and infirmed patients from conveniently and safely accessing the medical facility. The partner/owner also said that the proposed senior housing project would have an overall negative impact on his business-- especially since the medical facility plans to expand in the near future and anticipates the need for more than 36 public parking spaces.

Another speaker who resides in the immediate area was opposed to the site disposition and Urban Development Action Area designation for economic and aesthetic reasons.

There were no other speakers and the hearing was closed.

CONSIDERATION

The Commission believes that the proposed Urban Development Action Area designation and project and disposition of city-owned property, are appropriate.

The requested action would facilitate the development of an approximately 165,000 square foot mixed-use building of affordable senior housing, retail space and a senior citizens center under the Department of Housing Preservation and Development's LAMP program. The project is located on the west side of 29th Street between Hoyt Avenue and Astoria Boulevard. Zoned R6/C1-2, the

site has one tax lot (Block 839, Lot 1) that has approximately 43,829 square feet of lot area. This application would facilitate the development of 184 affordable rental units.

During the public review process concerns were raised by the Community Board, Borough President, City Planning Commission and by testimony given at its public hearing, regarding the loss of existing parking spaces necessitated by this proposal. The Department of Housing Preservation and Development in a letter dated January 26, 2006 stated that,

“the proposed project was originally designed to provide a total of 77 spaces, including 36 public short-term spaces and 41 spaces for the building’s residents and visitors...Councilmember Vallone recently committed an additional \$1.5 million, on top of the \$8 million he already committed to this project, increasing the total number of spaces to 109, including 69 short-and long-term public parking spaces and 41 spaces for the building’s residents and visitors...In sum, we feel that the loss of the municipal parking lot will not severely impact neighborhood parking. Short-term parking usage appears low but nonetheless will be almost doubled by the 68 public spaces that are now proposed for the project. The large majority of long-term and permit parking users will likely reconfigure their long-range commutes and take advantage of other parking options. The remaining Astoria-bound motorists can be accommodated in assigned parking on or close to the project site should they need it.”

With respect to testimony raised at the public hearing regarding the specific parking needs of an existing medical facility located opposite the existing municipal parking lot, the letter further stated that representatives of HANAC, HPD and Councilmember Vallone met with a representative of Advanced Radiological Imaging on January 13, 2006. HANAC extended an offer to Advanced Radiological Imaging to reserve a reasonable number of assigned spaces on their site

for its use. The letter concludes by stating that “We believe that through additional discussions with the community and with Councilmember Vallone’s generous contribution of additional funding, we have arrived at a solution that adequately addresses the community’s and the Commission’s concerns.”

The Commission believes that concerns raised during the public review process have been addressed by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development and that the project would provide important new housing opportunities and resources for senior citizens. The Commission therefore believes that the proposed Urban Development Action Area designation and project (UDAAP), and related disposition of city-owned property are appropriate.

RESOLUTION

RESOLVED, that the City Planning Commission finds that the action described herein will have no significant impact on the environment, and

WHEREAS the Department of Housing Preservation and Development has recommended the designation of 25-03 29th Street (Block 839, Lot 1) located in Community District 1, Borough of Queens as an Urban Development Action Area; and

WHEREAS the Department of Housing Preservation and Development has also recommended the approval of an Urban Development Action Area Project for such property;

THEREFORE, be it RESOLVED that the City Planning Commission, after due consideration of the appropriateness of the actions, certifies its unqualified approval of the following matters pursuant to the Urban Development Action Area Act:

- a) the designation of property located at 25-03 29th Street (Block 839, Lot 1) as an Urban development Action Area; and
- b) an Urban Development Action Area project for such area;

and the City Planning Commission recommends that the New York City Council find that:

- a) The present status of the area tends to impair or arrest sound development of the municipality;
- b) The financial aid in the form of tax incentives to be provided by the municipality pursuant to Section 696 of the Urban Development Action Area Act is necessary to enable the project to be undertaken; and
- c) The project is consistent with the policy and purposes stated in Section 691 of the Urban Development Action Area Act.

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(s) and the consideration described in this report, the application of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development for the disposition of city owned property located at 25-03 29th Street (Block 839, Lot 1) Community District 1, Borough of Queens, to a developer to be selected by HPD is approved (C 060168 HAQ).

The above resolution, duly adopted by the City Planning Commission on February 8, 2006 (Calendar No. 19), is filed with the Office of the Speaker, City Council and the Queens Borough President, in accordance with the requirements of Section 197-d of the New York City Charter.

AMANDA M. BURDEN, AICP, Chairman
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