

BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION
CD 12-ULURP APPLICATION NO: C 090397 ZMX
WEBSTER COMMONS REZONING
10/24/09

DOCKET DESCRIPTION

IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by Webster Commons, LLC pursuant to Sections 197-c and 201 of the New York City Charter for an amendment of the Zoning Map, Section No. 1d, by changing from an R6 District to an R7X District property bounded by Webster Avenue, a line 1,910 feet northerly of East Gun Hill Road, the westerly boundary of a railroad right-of-way (New York and Harlem Line), and a line 800 feet northerly of East Gun Hill Road, Borough of The Bronx, Community District 12, as shown on a diagram (for illustrative purposes only) dated August 17, 2009 and subject to the conditions of CEQR Declaration E-240.

BACKGROUND

This rezoning seeks to allow the construction of approximately 400 residential units in four buildings on 84,103 square feet of land, with 1,803 feet of street frontage along the western side of Webster Avenue, on Block 3360, Lot 76, by changing the zoning from R6 to R7X. This will increase the FAR of the property from 2.43 (3.0 under the Quality Housing Option) to 5.0. Under an R6, the height is governed by the sky exposure plane, and under the R6 Quality Housing Option, the maximum height is 70 feet. The increase to an R7X will allow for a maximum building height of 125 feet. The development will also contain 94 below-grade parking spaces. This property is located in Bronx Community Board 12, but is isolated from most of it by the Bronx River and Metro-North railroad tracks, and abuts Bronx Community Board 7.

The four building development will be broken down as follows:

- Building A: 13-stories, 143 units serving residents earning up to 60% of area median income (AMI), and 36 parking spaces.
- Building B: 13-stories, 105 units serving residents earning up to 100% AMI, and 26 parking spaces.
- Building C: 12-stories, 55 units serving senior residents earning up to 60% AMI, and 7 parking spaces.
- Building D: 9-stories, 97 units serving residents earning up to 100% AMI, and 24 parking spaces.

The immediate surrounding area is typified by the vacant land and the Bronx River Forest to the north, Bronx River and Metro-North railroad tracks to the east, a series of townhomes, an automobile dealership, the Metro-North Williamsbridge Station, and East Gun Hill Road to the south, and Woodlawn Cemetery and one-story commercial stores to the west.

The greater area encompasses the Norwood and Olinville neighborhoods. Norwood is typified by dense, mixed-use development ranging from small stretches of detached one to three-family homes to five through seven-story apartment buildings built primarily before 1950 to intense retail strips along East Gun Hill Road, Jerome Avenue, Bainbridge Avenue and East 204th Street to the Montefiore and North Central Bronx Hospital complexes, which employ over 12,000 people. Olinville is a dense, but smaller scale neighborhood with a greater prevalence of larger one to three-family homes, with some five through seven-story apartment buildings, and retail along White Plains Road.

The site is uniquely located in terms of transportation, as it is around the corner from the Gun Hill Road exit on the Bronx River Parkway, and Metro-North Williamsbridge Station. The site also has bus access via the BX28, BX30 and BX41. Subway access is present, though farther away, with the IRT 2, and IRT 5 rush-hour express, trains located five blocks east at East Gun Hill and White Plains Roads, the IND D train at East 205th Street and Perry Avenue located 6½ blocks away, and the IRT 4 train located at either Mosholu Parkway and Jerome Avenue or Woodlawn terminus approximately ½ mile away.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND ULURP CERTIFICATION

This application was reviewed pursuant to SEQRA and CEQR. An Environmental Assessment Statement was prepared for this application and designated as an Unlisted action, meaning there would be a significant impact, and resulted in a Positive Declaration. The City Planning Commission certified this application as complete on August 17th, 2009.

COMMUNITY BOARD PUBLIC HEARING

Bronx Community Board 12 held a public hearing and approved this application on August 26th, 2009 with a vote of 23 in favor, 0 against, and 0 abstaining.

BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S PUBLIC HEARING

The Bronx Borough President held a public hearing on this application on October 15th, 2009. The applicant and representatives attended. No other members of the public attended and the hearing was closed.

BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION

The rezoning of this parcel from R6 to R7X will bring life to a long desolate stretch of land along Webster Avenue between East Gun Hill Road and East 233rd Street. This

roadway has long been problematic in terms of dumping and serious speeding violations, some of which resulting in fatal accidents. The proposal is ambitious by creating a new mixed-income, multigenerational community that would seek to integrate itself with the Norwood community it abuts. The project will also hopefully be a catalyst to the proposed Webster Avenue/Norwood/Bedford Park rezoning currently under review by the New York Department of City Planning, particularly to Webster Avenue south of East Gun Hill Road. The project will also support long-struggling businesses at the corner of East Gun Hill Road and Webster Avenue, which has not previously had the amount of foot traffic that most of Norwood and White Plains Road encounters.

I appreciate the project's environmental goals by seeking to achieve LEED status and restoring an 11,415 square foot gorge that leads to the Bronx River. This space will be beautified as passive recreation space for the residents. My only concern the introduction of approximately 400 families to this corridor may present pedestrian traffic accidents. I urge the City to look at developing a center median along Webster Avenue north of East Gun Hill Road. This will not only provide a break for crossing pedestrian traffic, but will be an opportunity to provide attractive landscaping, while slowing traffic. I also urge the developers to maximize opportunity for light and air by adding more fenestration to the building, given its location surrounded by greenspace.

I recommend approval of this application.