

BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION
ULURP APPLICATION NO: C 180088 ZMX
WILLOW AVENUE REZONING
111 Willow Avenue

DOCKET DESCRIPTION

IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by Markland 745 LLC pursuant to Sections 197-c and 201 of the New York City Charter for the amendment of the Zoning Map, Section No. 6b:

1. Changing from an M1-2 District to an M1-2/R6A District property bounded by a line 280 feet northwesterly of Willow Avenue, East 134th Street, a line 100 feet northwesterly of Willow Avenue, and a line 100 feet northeasterly of East 133rd Street.
2. Changing from an M1-2 district to an M1-/R7D District property bounded by a line 100 feet northwesterly of Willow Avenue, East 134th Street, Willow Avenue, East 133rd Street, a line 80 feet northwesterly of Willow Avenue, and a line 100 feet northeasterly of East 133rd Street;\
3. Changing from an M1-2/R6A District to an M1-4/R7D District property bounded by a line 100 feet northwesterly of Willow Avenue, a line 100 feet northeasterly of East 133rd Street, a line 80 feet northwesterly of Willow Avenue, and East 133rd Street; and
4. Establishing a Special Mixed Use District (MX-1) bounded by a line 280 feet northwesterly of Willow Avenue, East 134th Street, Willow Avenue, East 133rd Street, a line 80 feet northwesterly of Willow Avenue, a line 100 feet northeasterly of East 133rd Street;

Borough of The Bronx, Community District #1, as shown on a diagram (for illustrative purposes only) dated November 27, 2017, and subject to the conditions of CEQR Declaration E-454.

BACKGROUND

The proposed action this application is considering pertains to property located on the west side of Willow Avenue, between East 133rd Street on the south and East 134th Street to the north (Block 2562, Lots, 41, 49, 56, 58, 60 and parts of lots 40 and 61). These lots are defined as the Project Area and are situated on the eastern portion of Block 2562. Approving this application would amend the Zoning Map by eliminating an existing M1-2 District and an M1-2/R6A (MX-1) to an M1-2/R6A and M1-4/R7D District (MX-1). These actions would extend the Special Mixed Use District (MX-1) to include the entirety of the subject block.

The Development Site is composed of Block 2562, Lots 49, 56, 58 and 60. It includes 20,646 square feet of property offering 206 feet of frontage on west side of Willow Avenue as well as 104 feet on both East 133rd and East 134th Streets, offering 206 feet of frontage on west side of Willow Avenue as well as 104 feet on both East 133rd and East 134th Streets. Existing development on this property includes a three story commercial office building and a single story warehouse. The site also includes a surface parking area composed of 50-spaces. Lots 40 and part of lots 41 and 61 are included in this rezoning matter, but are not part of the development site.

Upon adoption of the zoning changes as proposed herein, the applicant intends to construct an eight story residential mixed use building. Features of this building include:

- 115,602 square feet of floor area (5.60 FAR)
- 104,477 square feet of residential space
- 126 dwelling units
- 15,125 feet of commercial retail space
- 26 accessory off-street parking space
- 63 bicycle spaces
- Green roof and an Enterprise Green rating
- 3,300 square feet for use as a community room
- All appliances will be Energy Star rated

The retail/commercial space will feature windows that will facilitate street illumination. Access to the commercial venues will be on East 134th Street. Entry to the garage will be provided on East 133rd Street.

Residential unit tallies include:

19 studio units:	approximately 370 gross square feet
66 one-bedroom units:	approximately 500-538 square feet
22 two-bedroom units:	approximately 785-900 square feet
19 three-bedroom units:	approximately 917-1,170 square feet

The affordability of these units includes:

30% of Area Median Income (AMI) Our Space:	12 Units=10% total unit count
30% of AMI:	6 Units= 5% total unit count
40% of AMI:	6 Units= 5% total unit count
50% of AMI:	6 Units= 5% total unit count
60% of AMI:	18 Units= 15% total unit count
80% of AMI:	30 Units= 25% total unit count
110% of AMI:	17 Units= 10% total unit count
120% of AMI:	30 Units= 25% total unit count

40% of the total number of units will remain affordable in perpetuity.

Development of the surrounding community is typified by low and mid-rise industrial buildings. The surrounding area is largely void of residential development. Retail activity is found on East 138th Street and on Bruckner Boulevard. Two homeless shelters within the four block radius of

the site. Access to public transportation via subway is found on Cypress Avenue at East 138th Street. Bus transportation operates on East 138th Street.

ENVIRONMENT REVIEW AND ULURP CERTIFICATION

This application has been reviewed pursuant to CEQR and SEQR and received a Negative Designation. The City Planning Commission certified this application as complete on November 27, 2017.

BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD PUBLIC HEARING

Bronx Community Board #1 held a public hearing on this application on January 25, 2018. A vote recommending approval of this application was 15 in favor, seven against and zero abstaining.

BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S PUBLIC HEARING

A public hearing was convened by the Bronx Borough President on February 15, 2018. Representatives of the applicant were present and spoke in favor this application. No other members of the public offered testimony. The hearing was closed.

BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION

The development of 111 Willow Avenue has the potential of being transformative. The applicant proposes to demolish an existing low-rise industrial building and subsequently construct an eight-story residential building offering 126 units of affordable housing. The MX-1 Designation will facilitate this development.

I am very pleased to note that the profile of this proposed building will reflect the "industrial" context of the surrounding community. The inclusion of "factory loft-style" windows coupled with a brick façade that is reminiscent of an industrial building will complement the surrounding community, rather than conflict with it. So too, given that the by including retail venues which will offer additional illumination along Willow Avenue and the intersecting streets, I believe this development will in fact set the standard for similar projects which have yet to be presented.

Given the low-built profile of the surrounding community, by "stepping down" the height of this proposed building two objectives are realized. First, the building mass is reduced as it drops from eight stories on the east (Willow Avenue frontage) to six stories to the west. Second, this height difference affords an opportunity for the inclusion of roof-space for passive recreation. A green roof approximating 7,875 square feet is envisioned for the building's eighth floor roof. The use of Energy Star appliances, low-flow plumbing and LED lighting are essential and I am pleased to note included in this project.

At my public hearing the applicant noted that the square foot size of the various units to be included, have not been finalized. As my record on this matter demonstrates, the minimum

standards established by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) are not satisfactory. As such, one-bedroom units composed of 500 square feet, two-bedroom units offering 785 square feet and three bedroom flats offering 917 square feet; would fail to garnish my support for this project. I therefore recommend that the applicant consult with my office as these plans are finalized.

Beyond the specifics associated with the design and function of 111 Willow Avenue, I do have additional concerns that warrant comment.

- The surrounding area functions as an industrial community. Consequently, sidewalks and street crossings do not favor active pedestrian uses more commonly found in established residential communities.
- Within a three block radius of the proposed development site no retail options are in place. Most notably is the lack of a supermarket and drug store. Therefore, I strongly urge the applicant to solicit retailers that can offer these options.
- Access to mass transit requires a four block walk through the industrial area now in place, which after sunset I believe poses safety challenges
- The presence of two homeless shelters which are most active at night must be acknowledged.
- Given the location's disadvantages I have herein outlined, to attract residents unit sizes must exceed the minimum set by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD). As I have herein noted, I acknowledge that at my hearing the applicant indicated a willingness to consider larger unit measurements.

My observations must account for the fact that at this time no comparable development can be found within the surrounding community. As such, the applicant must be prepared to address my concerns by working with the appropriate city agencies and private sector interests to best assure those who will reside on Willow Avenue that their needs and concerns are fully resolved.

I recommend this application be approved while anticipating that the applicant will resolve to my satisfaction the various square-foot size of the residential units to be constructed.