

**BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION
ULURP APPLICATION C160160 PQX
Watson Avenue Early Childhood Center**

DOCKET DESCRIPTION

IN THE MATTER OF AN application submitted by the Administration for Children Services (ACS) and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, pursuant to Section 197-c of the New York City Charter, for the acquisition of property located at 1880 Watson Avenue (block 3732, Lot 39) for continued use as a child care facility.

BACKGROUND

Approval of this application will facilitate a lease renewal for property located at 1880 Watson Avenue, (Block 3732, Lot 39). This two-story story building occupies the southeast corner of Watson Avenue and Underhill Avenue, in Bronx Community District #9, in a R5 zone. It includes 30,740 square feet and has been serving the surrounding community as a child day care center since 1975.

The child day care center is operated by the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) and provides daily activities for up to 171 children ages 3 to 4. The center's program commences at 8:00 a.m. and concludes at 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Children are taken to and from the center by parents. A program staff includes 53 professional and paraprofessional employees, as well as a support staff supplemented by volunteers and interns. The day's programming includes:

- Breakfast, lunch and a mid-afternoon snack each day
- Supervised playtime composed of both indoor and outdoor recreational activities.
- Educational programming specifically designed to three and four year old toddlers.

The child care center occupies the entire two-story building, including a lower rooftop play area, and an upper roof top play area, for a total of 19,670 square feet of interior space and approximately 11,070 square feet of rooftop play area. The first floor includes five pre-school classrooms, three for 3 year old children, one for 4 year olds, and a fifth one for a mix of 3 and 4 year olds. It also has administrative offices, a staff lounge, two kitchens, and bathroom facilities. The second floor also has five pre-school classrooms, two for 3 year old children and three for 4 year old children, and the fifth one for both 3 to 4 year olds.

The surrounding community is typified by three-and four-story attached houses and small apartment buildings. Retail activity can be found one block south along Bruckner Boulevard and three blocks north of the child care center on Westchester Avenue. A junior high school is located two blocks east of the child care center, along Watson Avenue between Virginia Avenue and Pugsley Avenue.

Subway service is available within a three block radius via the 6 train station at Parkchester Avenue. It is also accessible by the Bx36, Bx39, BxM8, and Bx5 buses with stops within three blocks of the facility.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND ULURP CERTIFICATION

The application has been reviewed and has been determined that it is a type II action pursuant to 6 NYCRR Part 617.5(c)(26) and as such does not require CEQR review. The City Planning Commission certified this application as complete on April 23, 2018.

COMMUNITY BOARD PUBLIC HEARING

Bronx Community District #9 held a public hearing on this application on June 21, 2018. A unanimous vote recommending approval of this application was 20 in favor, zero opposed and zero abstaining..

BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S PUBLIC HEARING

The Bronx Borough President convened a meeting on this application of July 17, 2018. A representative was present and spoke in favor of this application. There being no other members of the public present, the hearing was closed.

BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION

Child day care facilities are an essential service every community requires. Such facilities are beneficial to children, parents, and the extended community. For children, they provide a space for social, emotional, physical and cognitive growth. They also provide parents opportunities for personal growth, providing them with time to work, attend school acquire vocational training.

As I review this application I am mindful of the fact that the building in which this facility is located provides space for the many functions it must satisfy as a daycare center. I am however increasingly aware that this facility, like so many others in The Bronx, are located in buildings that lack ample windows for light inside, and therefore appear more like modified industrial buildings on the outside. Perhaps considered an advantage in years past, I believe today these buildings must let the sunshine in. How to rectify this challenge is a matter that warrants consideration between the building's private sector owner and the various city agencies that lease this building. So too is the inclusion of fire retardant sprinkler systems that may save the lives of those who work and attend programs in this building. Over time we have come to better appreciate the importance of building design, most notably how buildings can best safely serve those who use it.

I recommend approval of this application.