



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

Brooklyn Borough President Recommendation

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

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INSTRUCTIONS

1. Return this completed form with any attachments to the Calendar Information Office, City Planning Commission, Room 2E at the above address.
2. Send one copy with any attachments to the applicants representatives as indicated on the Notice of Certification.

APPLICATION # 060054 ZMK/060053 ZRK

In the matter of an application submitted by the Department of City Planning pursuant to Sections 197-c and 201 of the New York City Charter for an amendment to the zoning map and zoning text amendments, pertaining to the South Park Slope neighborhood, generally bounded by 15th Street, 4th Avenue, Greenwood Cemetery and Prospect Park West, as described in the "Notice of Certification," to facilitate the contextual rezoning of a section of Community District 7 and to make the inclusionary housing program applicable to the proposed R8A district. (060054 ZMK/060053 ZRK)

COMMUNITY DISTRICT NO.

7

BOROUGH OF BROOKLYN

RECOMMENDATION

- APPROVE
 APPROVE WITH MODIFICATIONS/CONDITIONS
 DISAPPROVE WITH MODIFICATIONS/CONDITIONS
 DISAPPROVE

EXPLANATION OF RECOMMENDATION – MODIFICATIONS/CONDITIONS

- RECOMMENDATION ATTACHED
 RECOMMENDATION TO FOLLOW


BOROUGH PRESIDENT

September 26, 2005

DATE

ATTACHMENT

CONSIDERATION

The Brooklyn Borough President supports this application for the contextual downzoning of South Park Slope and Green-Wood Heights and the accompanying text amendment. The Brooklyn Borough President's policy supports rezoning actions that are consistent with the community's needs and infrastructural capacity to handle development. He supports rezoning initiatives that preserve the character and scale of Brooklyn's neighborhoods where appropriate.

The quality of life and property values of South Park Slope and Green-Wood Heights have been degraded by an onslaught of development that disrespects the scale and charm of the neighborhoods, as bulky buildings have been constructed where well-maintained small homes once stood. South Park Slope and Green-Wood Heights communities successfully united to stop the demolition that was ruining the character of the neighborhood.

There are many individuals and organizations that have been instrumental in addressing this problem including Assemblymember James Brennan; Council Members Sara Gonzalez and Bill de Blasio; Community Board 7; its Chair Joseph Longobardi and District Manager Jeremy Laufer; the Department of City Planning (DCP) and its Chair, Amanda Burden; as well as the South Park Slope Community Group and the Concerned Citizens of Green-Wood Heights.

The Borough President believes that DCP has developed a rezoning proposal and text amendment for this section of South Park Slope and Green-Wood Heights that respects the built environment and will preserve the neighborhood for generations to come.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Borough President supports rezoning that increases density along the section of Fourth Avenue contained in the proposed rezoning as a means to facilitate housing production in Brooklyn.

There is a significant need for housing development in Brooklyn. Areas that are situated near subways, such as Fourth Avenue, are suitable places for such development. The Borough President believes that this rezoning would further the transformation of Fourth Avenue into a "grand residential boulevard." The width of the street and the mass transit access support the transformation of this corridor into such a boulevard, in the spirit of Ocean Parkway.

The Borough President supports the use of the affordable housing floor area bonus, established as a component of recent rezonings in the Chelsea and Clinton districts of Manhattan and Greenpoint/Williamsburg in Brooklyn to Fourth Avenue.

However, the Borough President is concerned that simply extrapolating the zoning mechanisms may not result in actually creating affordable housing.

The proliferation of development between 15th and 24th Streets suggests that even without a rezoning to greatly increase residential density, properties along Fourth Avenue would ultimately be redeveloped. Already strong real estate forces have been eroding the ability of low- or moderate-income families to remain in their neighborhood. New developments along Fourth Avenue are likely to be catalysts for the upward spiraling of rents, fueled by an influx of upper middle-income residents to the area who are likely to be able to pay more for housing than current residents. Much of South Park Slope, Green-Wood Heights and Sunset Park's rental housing stock is composed of buildings that are too small to be protected by the regulations of rent stabilization. If utilized, the inclusionary housing zoning floor area bonus is projected to create nearly 60 new or preserved units of affordable

housing units in the near term and 120 over the long term. However, the Borough President believes that in this instance there are many factors that may result in developers rejecting the voluntary floor area incentive that would yield the affordable housing.

The Borough President is also concerned that unless a developer seeks to build an exclusive rental development, there is no readily available government financing option to offset the cost of providing the affordable housing.

There may also not be enough incentive to attract condominium developers to take the bonus. Problems will arise in providing for affordable rentals, because even though the affordable units could be constructed off-site, there is much uncertainty in relying on or coordinating with another property owner's willingness to permanently stabilize existing apartments, given the strength of the real estate market and the likely limited number of stabilized residential buildings in the qualifying area. There are too few near-term development sites to leave this to chance.

The Borough President believes that the incentive for developers to choose to develop affordable housing need to be stronger. He recommends that DCP do this by reducing the as-of-right floor area ratio and increasing the affordable housing floor area bonus.

We are in a race; developers are rushing to complete projects before the new zoning is adopted. Given the urgency of the situation, the Borough President urges the City Planning Commission to adopt the rezoning with modifications at its October 19th meeting and the City Council as soon as possible thereafter.

There are also other concerns the Borough President believes need to be addressed during follow-up, including protecting existing residents from displacement, parking, follow-up rezonings, and landscaping.

PROTECTION FROM DISPLACEMENT

The residential neighborhoods of South Park Slope and Green-Wood Heights, and areas of Community District 7 beyond the area of the proposed rezoning, are largely comprised of small buildings that are not subject to rent protection laws.

While the communities have had stable residential populations for most of recent history, proximity to "Brownstone Brooklyn" and once-affordable rents has led to the recent influx of more affluent new households. As more and more people "discover" South Park Slope and Green-Wood Heights, rents have climbed substantially in many unregulated apartments. Many long-time residents are unfortunately being displaced.

While the proposed rezoning is anticipated to generate approximately 600 new housing units the Borough President remains concerned that the ongoing upward trend in market rent will continue unabated. While there is an expectation that a percentage of the new housing will be set aside as affordable, this alone does not sufficiently protect residents from displacement. It is the Borough President's understanding that DCP is preparing an "anti-displacement" zoning text amendment as a follow up to the recently approved Williamsburg-Greenpoint rezoning. The Borough President supports the application of such an amendment to these neighborhoods and adjacent areas of Sunset Park.

PARKING

The Borough President is concerned that the new R8A zoning requires too little parking for car ownership patterns in this part of Brooklyn. The South Park Slope area is already experiencing a deficit of on-street parking spaces. Therefore, the Borough President calls on DCP to initiate a zoning text amendment for R8A districts in Community District 7 that amends the parking requirement from 20 and 40 percent to 100 percent and eliminates the waiver of otherwise required parking.

SUBSEQUENT REZONINGS

The rezoning of Fourth Avenue as proposed also brings attention to block fronts along the west side of Fourth Avenue that are currently M1-2D south of the Prospect Expressway. Property along this frontage of Fourth Avenue contains a wide range of uses, including residential. For this section of Fourth Avenue to truly achieve status as a grand residential boulevard, these additional areas along Fourth Avenue should be analyzed by DCP for their potential to provide more opportunities to facilitate housing.

The Borough President believes it is appropriate for DCP to investigate claims made that the proposed rezoning allows for too much height for certain blocks, including blocks referenced along 23rd Street.

LANDSCAPING

The greenery along Ocean, Eastern, Pelham and Mosholu Parkways, Park Avenue, Broadway and the Grand Concourse have contributed to the beauty of those boulevards. Ocean and Eastern Parkways are most special because of both mandated large setbacks and planted malls separating the roadways. Mosholu Parkway has a wide greenway separating the roadways. Both Park Avenue and Broadway have landscaped malls, despite being right over open subway trenches. The Grand Concourse, while having a nominal width front yard, has shrubs and hedges lining the apartment buildings. Fourth Avenue should be transformed into such a special boulevard. To truly evolve into "Brooklyn Boulevard," the center traffic median should be treated in a manner consistent with Park Avenue and Broadway uptown. Within the public right-of-way, each building along Fourth Avenue should have a landscaped area immediately adjacent to the front of the building to accommodate such plantings such as shrubs, hedges and flowers.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1) Be it resolved, that the President of the Borough of Brooklyn, pursuant to section 197-c of the New York City Charter, and based upon the consideration described in this report, recommends approval of this application by the City Planning Commission and/or the City Council subject to the condition that:

the City Planning Commission and City Council modify the zoning text amendment that restricts R8A as-of-right development in Community District 7 from a floor area ratio of 5.4 to 4.0.

Be it further resolved that the Borough President calls on:

- 1) The Department of City Planning to initiate a zoning text and map amendments study that:
 - a) For R8A districts in Community District 7, amends the parking requirements from 20 and 40 percent to 100 percent and eliminates the option to otherwise waive parking;
 - b) Protect residents from displacement in South Park slope, Green-Wood Heights and adjacent areas within Community District 7;
 - d) Evaluates the frontages along the west side of Fourth Avenue for residential rezoning.
- 2) The City to analyze and implement means to provide landscaping along Fourth Avenue.