



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

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Community District 1 Distribution TO	Borough President Marty Markowitz FROM
February 6, 2007 DATE	Kevin Parris, Land Use & Community Coordinator Phone: (718) 802-3856 E-Mail: kparris@brooklynbp.nyc.org CONTACT
ULURP Recommendation 070135 PPK RE:	4 NO. PAGES, INCLUDING COVER

Attached is the recommendation report for ULURP application 070135 PPK

If you have any questions, please contact Kevin Parris at (718) 802-3856.
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ATTACHMENT

PUBLIC HEARING

On January 24, 2007, the borough president held a public hearing on the proposed disposition of property located at 136 Wythe Avenue, known as the "People's Firehouse", for ULURP application 070135 PPK. There were 21 speakers including Council Member David Yassky, the Chair of Community Board 1 (CB 1) and representatives of Congress Member Nydia Velazquez and Assembly Member Joseph Lentol. All speakers spoke in opposition to the application. Concerns raised included the adequacy of fire suppression services and the possibility of having the property jointly used by the People's Firehouse Inc. and Neighbors Allied for Good Growth (NAG) for community purposes, possibly including affordable housing.

CONSIDERATION

The borough president believes that it is important to understand the critical role that the community played in the last thirty years in support of Engine Company 212. In response to efforts by the City to shutter this firehouse in 1975, community residents had undertaken an effort led by Adam Venezki to continuously occupy the firehouse for 18 months until the firehouse, dubbed the "People's Firehouse", was officially returned to operational status. From what began as a protest movement and issue for the community to rally for a cause, evolved into a proud community organization, the People's Firehouse, Inc. providing much needed services for the community. The People's Firehouse has played an ongoing role in the affairs of the greater Williamsburg and Greenpoint communities. Their achievements and history of advocacy is something that should be celebrated. The borough president believes that the City could not pay a higher tribute to this organization than having it play a role in the future of the firehouse that was the home for Engine Company 212.

Another injustice led to the formation of Neighbors Against Garbage which played a critical role in the fight against the proliferation of commercial garbage transfers along the waterfront and against the RADIAC nuclear waste disposal facility. At the borough president's public hearing, both organizations advocated their interest in partnering to develop alternative means to use this property for community use or affordable housing.

Despite the sentiment continuously expressed by the community, the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) submitted an application for the disposition of the people's firehouse. The borough president believes that it would do the community a disservice to dispose of this property to the highest bidder. Engine Company 212 stood as more than a firehouse to this community. The historical ties between this firehouse and its community are truly a rarity. Rather, the City should work with CB 1, the People's Firehouse Inc. and NAG to develop a community response plan for the property's reuse. One such possibility is for community space with another possibility being affordable housing.

During the Williamsburg- Greenpoint rezoning, the City identified city-owned parcels that were committed to facilitating the development of affordable housing. The firehouse vacated by Engine 212 was not considered a "surplus" property at the time. There is an opportunity here for the City to transfer jurisdiction of the site to HPD so that the community can obtain some affordable housing, a community facility use or a combination of the two. In that regard, the borough president wrote to Commissioners Hirst of DCAS and Donovan of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) outlining this concern. The borough president has not yet received a response to this letter, however, he would expect that one will be forthcoming so that it can be shared with the City Council during its review of the application, should the application not be withdrawn.

The borough president was pleased that the representative for DCAS expressed the agency's open-mindedness of listening to the concerns brought forth from the community at both the Community Board hearing as well as his own hearing. He urges that the City Planning Commission, upon hearing the testimony of the public, to concur with the borough president, that this application should be withdrawn. Furthermore, DCAS should meet with HPD to discuss the possibility of transferring jurisdiction to assist in accomplishing the interest of the community.

The borough president shares the concern that the wave of new residential construction as a result of the recent rezoning in the Williamsburg-Greenpoint area warrants additional fire suppression services. When the borough president submitted his recommendation report to the City Planning Commission and City Council in regard for the rezoning, he expressed a need for reinstating Engine 212. The borough president suggested the possibility of having this done as part of a new state of the art facility to house this engine company.

RECOMMENDATION

Be it resolved that the Borough President of the Borough of Brooklyn, pursuant to section 197-c of the New York City Charter, recommends that the City Planning Commission and City Council disapprove the disposition of one city-owned property located at 136 Wythe Avenue, pursuant to zoning.

Be it further resolved that the City should reinstate Engine Company 212 in a new, state of the art facility within a site in the Williamsburg and Greenpoint waterfront neighborhood.