



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

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Community District 6 Distribution TO	Borough President Marty Markowitz FROM
February 7, 2007 DATE	Kevin Parris, Land Use & Community Coordinator Phone: (718) 802-3856 E-Mail: kparris@brooklynbp.nyc.org CONTACT
ULURP Recommendation 070134 PPK RE:	4 NO. PAGES, INCLUDING COVER

Attached is the recommendation report for ULURP application 070134 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 299 DeGraw Street, the former firehouse for Engine Company 204 (EC 204), ULURP application 070134 PPK. There were 12 speakers including Assembly Member Joan Millman, and representatives of: Community Board 6 (CB 6); Council Member Bill de Blasio; and, Congress Member Nydia Velazquez. All speakers spoke in opposition to the application. Concerns raised included the adequacy of fire suppression services in light of population growth, the extent of the elderly population, and the aging housing stock within the area that had been served by EC 204. In addition, Assembly Member Millman and the representative of Council Member de Blasio advised that the Assembly and Council member had written to the chair of the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) to request that the firehouse be designated as a New York City landmark. A representative of the Friends of Firefighters also made the suggestion that the building should house its organization to improve its services towards active and retired firefighters and their families.

CONSIDERATION

The borough president wants Engine Company 204 promptly returned to service. He agrees with the community and local elected officials that the city should not decrease fire protection services in this community. There are many factors that have been identified including the combination of an aging population and housing stock in the Cobble Hill and Carroll Gardens neighborhoods, along with the possibility of residential development in portions of the industrial district along the banks of the Gowanus Canal. In the event of a fire, seniors who may lack the mobility to react to an emergency situation would be at greater risk. Further, the vast numbers of homes in this area are constructed of wood. As a result, they are at risk of more substantial damage in a fire.

As development continues to flourish throughout the borough, adequate fire suppression services will be needed. New and anticipated construction projects such as those along Schermerhorn and Livingston Streets, Fourth Avenue, the Gowanus industrial area, as well as Atlantic Yards, will add to the population that the remaining firehouses must be responsible for without the assistance of EC 204. The borough president believes that these factors warrant reconsideration in regards to the use of this historic firehouse. In light of all this, the borough president believes that it would do the community a disservice to dispose of this property to the highest bidder.

However, pending the City's agreement to restore service to this firehouse, the borough president believes that the City should investigate ways in which this property can best be used. One such possibility includes the reuse of this property as a temporary house for other engine companies on an as needed basis. The Fire Department should investigate whether certain nearby firehouses warrant renovations that could utilize this firehouse to accommodate other engine companies. This is consistent with the recommendation of CB 6 that called for maintaining the firehouse as a temporary accommodation for engine companies displaced in order to facilitate firehouse improvements.

There are precedents for such a need. During the recent reconstruction of two new firehouses in the Bushwick and Sunset Park areas, alternative means to house those fire companies were arranged. In order to better assess the possibility of this firehouse being used as a temporary accommodation, the borough president wrote to Commissioner Scoppetta of the Fire Department and Commissioner Hirst of the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) to inquire about this need. 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.

The borough president was pleased that the representative from DCAS expressed the agency's open-mindedness of listening to the concerns brought forth by the community at both the CB 6 hearing as well as his own hearing. The borough president urges the City Planning Commission, upon hearing the testimony of the public, to concur with his view that this application should be withdrawn.

The borough president shares the concerns of his colleagues Council Member de Blasio and Assembly Member Millman that the LPC should undertake a study of this firehouse to determine its status as a landmark. He believes that its historical significance, as a structure dating to the initial development of this brownstone neighborhood, warrants consideration.

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 299 DeGraw Street, pursuant to zoning.

Be it further resolved that the Landmarks Preservation Committee should consider 299 DeGraw Street as a landmark.