

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 applicant's representatives as indicated on the Notice of Certification.

APPLICATION #: 100325 ZSK – 100326 HAK

Providence House I

In the matter applications submitted by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development pursuant to: a) Article 16 of the General Municipal Law of New York State for the designation of property located at 329 Lincoln Road as an Urban Development Action Area; and an Urban Development Action Area Project for such area and pursuant to Section 197-c of the New York City Charter for the disposition of such property to a developer to be selected by HPD; and, b) Sections 197-c and 201 of the New York City Charter for the grant of a special permit pursuant to Section 74-902 of the Zoning Resolution to permit the allowable community facility floor area ratio of Section 24-11 to facilitate development of a six-story building, tentatively known as Providence House I, with approximately 26 units, to be developed under the Department of Housing Preservation and Development's Supportive Housing Loan Program.

COMMUNITY DISTRICT NO. 9

BOROUGH OF BROOKLYN

RECOMMENDATION

100325 ZSK – Special Permit

APPROVE
 APPROVE WITH
MODIFICATIONS/CONDITIONS

DISAPPROVE
 DISAPPROVE WITH
MODIFICATIONS/CONDITIONS

100326 HAK – Land Disposition

APPROVE
 APPROVE WITH
MODIFICATIONS/CONDITIONS

DISAPPROVE
 DISAPPROVE WITH
MODIFICATIONS/CONDITIONS



BOROUGH PRESIDENT

August 18, 2010

DATE

**RECOMMENDATION FOR THE PROPOSED
ZONING MAP CHANGE FOR COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT
100325 ZSK – 100326 HAK**

These applications by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) seek land use actions in order to facilitate the development of Providence House, a six-story residential building with approximately 26 units within the Lefferts Garden community.

PUBLIC HEARING

On July 8, 2010 the borough president held a public hearing to discuss the Providence House land use proposal. Twenty-six speakers testified with 13 speaking in favor and 13 against the proposal.

Supporters for Providence House cited that the existing Providence transitional housing facility in the area has not been the cause of any problems and that the behavior of their tenants is admirable. It was noted that the populations being serviced by such facilities need places like this to provide permanent housing with case management services. Proponents also felt that the proposal with its on-site security would be a better option for the community as opposed to maintaining a vacant site that is a blight on the block.

Opponents to the proposal expressed concerns over the transitory nature of single-household residents in the predominately family oriented area. Speakers felt the community will become burdened because of the proximity of this site to similar facilities. Many were concerned with the stigma that having these types of supportive housing facilities will bring to the community. A number of speakers believed that another use should be investigated for this site, one that will benefit the entire community.

Subsequent to the hearing, the borough president received a letter from HPD addressing some of the concerns raised by the community. The letter detailed the longstanding practices of Providence House and their chosen partner for this development, Community Access. Of the 24 years that Providence has operated a facility in Community District 9 (CD 9), there have been no incidents or altercations with community members.

CONSIDERATION

Community board 9 voted against this proposal.

The borough president supports the disposition of city properties that increases the supply of affordable housing options for Brooklyn residents. There is a great demand for affordable housing in Brooklyn, especially among the low-income population. Along with this demand, the borough president believes that there is a need for supportive housing options for individuals that are circumstantially homeless, as well as coming out from transitional housing programs.

The Providence House proposal will include supportive permanent housing opportunities for those now residing in transitional facilities. It will provide on-site supportive and referral services to assist residents of the building with disabilities and other special needs, to integrate into the community. It has been clearly demonstrated that the most cost effective means to address the formerly homeless needs is to provide permanent, supportive housing.

The project as proposed will provide affordable housing opportunities exclusively for single female residents. Of the proposed 26 units (super unit included), 20 will cater to those residents who were formerly homeless or require supportive needs while five will be allotted for low income tenants, with incomes not to exceed 60 percent of area median income (AMI).

The borough president recognizes that this Lincoln Road block and the surrounding community are characterized by long-tenured families with a stake in the neighborhood. The community has stated concerns questioning whether Providence House would exacerbate present conditions by introducing residents with supportive needs onto the block. The residents of the area have done a great deal to overcome prior concerns that challenged their quality-of-life and are on the verge of overcoming remaining concerns. The borough president understands the view expressed by residents that Providence House might hamper these accomplishments.

In addition, the neighbors have expressed concerns that the community is already over-saturated by supportive housing facilities. Testimony was provided to the borough president that included documentation that show many other comparable sites, with populations that require more supportive services. Providence House is not typical of what is defined as supportive housing under the City's "Fair Share" standards. Providence House and its care provider partner have established a very successful and meritorious program with a positive track record. This organization, which strives to transform the lives of those in need, aims to lessen the dependency on support of those within its program. Participants graduate from transitional living into permanent supportive housing, all the while receiving services to help them ultimately gain employment and find a permanent home for their families.

However, the borough president is concerned that the Providence House proposal does not reflect an appropriate blend of supportive housing and units for low income households. It is the policy of the borough president to seek an appropriate mix that provides more opportunities for family housing. Having a successful integration of populations makes it more readily apparent that such mixtures would be an asset within the community-at-large.

APPROPRIATE OCCUPANCY

The borough president has reviewed supportive housing projects that contained more balance between the ratio of supportive units and units for low income households. Such unit distribution is viewed as being a better way of blending in with the host community. Proposals such as the Fifth Avenue Committee's 575 Fifth Avenue project, the Bowery Residence Committee's Liberty Avenue project and the Kosciuszko Street Supportive Housing project in Bedford-Stuyvesant, provided this more traditional proportion of 60 percent supportive units and 40 percent low-income. The borough president does not believe there is any justification that this site warrants deviation from this standard, due to the residential context of the block. He calls for the implementation of the 60/40 split as a condition of the disposition.

The borough president also believes that an exclusively single-room occupancy (SRO) population is not consistent with the character of the surrounding neighborhood, which contains a healthy stock of family oriented dwellings. As currently presented, this project excludes families of any kind from taking advantage of this opportunity. In recent years, the borough president has reviewed similar supportive housing projects where he has called for a mixture in the types of units offered. If the project can

incorporate some family-oriented units within its low-income set aside, the development would better blend with the surrounding neighborhood while still servicing its intended population. The borough president does not believe that this site is appropriate to support a development that caters to a strictly SRO population for low-income housing.

SPECIAL PERMIT

As part of the Providence House proposal, a special bulk permit has been requested to increase the permissible floor area, yielding nine additional units. This results in a building that is taller than those surrounding it. Lefferts Garden, specifically, and CD 9 on a whole contain the character of a community warranting height based contextual zoning. The borough president generally supports the preservation of the scale of communities. He believes that respecting the context along Lincoln Road is an important consideration. If the block had already been rezoned to a district that reflects the built context along this street, the special permit would not have been applicable for this site. The borough president believes that as proposed, the project does not warrant an exception to the permitted floor area. He recommends disapproval of the special permit for the project as currently configured.

However, if the project sponsors were to modify the proposal prior to action of the City Planning Commission in a manner to provide 40 percent of the floor area set aside for low incomes, with perhaps half of such units dedicated to multiple person households, the borough president believes this special permit request could be justified.

COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Many in the community are concerned that the residents of the supportive units would compromise the quality-of-life in the community. The borough president believes that it is essential to establish a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) that would remain in place for the duration of the operation of this facility. The CAC should play a role in being briefed on the progress of construction, renting of apartments, and being apprised of ongoing operations. The borough president believes that given the community's concerns, it would be appropriate for the developer to begin to work with CAC members regarding the membership and duties of the CAC.

RECOMMENDATION

The recommendation of the borough president reflects the legitimate concerns of area residents and takes into consideration the meritorious efforts of Providence House as an organization, as noted in the consideration. Therefore,

Be it resolved that the Borough President of Brooklyn, pursuant to section 197-c of the New York City Charter, recommends that the City Planning Commission and City Council approve the UDAAP designation and disposition of city-owned land and disapproval of the special permit on condition of the following:

1. That the proposal includes a number of low-income units that will allow for families to be eligible for residency.
2. That the proposal provides a ratio of 40 percent of the units designated for those with low-incomes households.

Be it further resolved that the developer should begin establishing a Community Advisory Committee to address the community's concerns.