

Brooklyn Borough President Recommendation
CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
22 Reade Street, New York, NY 10007
CalendarOffice@planning.nyc.gov



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 #: GRACE HAREWOOD SENIOR CENTER AND YOUNG MINDS DAYCARE CENTER – 150297 PQK

In the matter of the application, submitted by the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), Department for the Aging (DFTA) and Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS), requests the acquisition of privately-owned property at 966-72 Fulton Street within the Clinton Hill neighborhood of Brooklyn, in Community District 2. Approval will facilitate a lease renewal, for a 10 year term, to ensure continued provision of childcare services and senior center services.

COMMUNITY DISTRICT NO. 2

BOROUGH OF BROOKLYN

RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE
 APPROVE WITH
MODIFICATIONS/CONDITIONS

DISAPPROVE
 DISAPPROVE WITH
MODIFICATIONS/CONDITIONS

SEE ATTACHED

BOROUGH PRESIDENT

October 16, 2015

DATE

RECOMMENDATION FOR GRACE HAREWOOD SENIOR CENTER AND YOUNG MINDS DAYCARE CENTER – 150297 PQK

The Administration for Children's Services (ACS), Department for the Aging (DFTA) and Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS), request the acquisition of privately-owned property at 966-72 Fulton Street within the Clinton Hill neighborhood of Brooklyn, in Community District 2. Approval will facilitate a lease renewal, for a 10 year term, to ensure continued provision of childcare services and senior center services at this location.

On October 7th, 2015, the Borough President held a public hearing on the acquisition request. There were two speakers in support of this item. The Executive Director of the Fulton Area Business (FAB) Alliance pointed out that this center is crucial for both seniors and children in this area, and he looks forward to more collaboration with the center in regard to enhancing the building's frontage. A reporter for Our Time Press also pointed out that the center is a staple for this community but expressed concern for lease duration.

The representative for ACS stated that 30 of the children are funded via discretionary funds of the City Council, about 20 children are funded by the Department of Education, and another 80 children are funded by the Department of Youth and Community Development through the afterschool program.

In response to the Borough President's interests in the efforts to provide seniors with continued awareness of the benefits provided by this senior center, the representative for the operator stated that outreach is done through printed materials on services, programs and special events to neighborhood churches and senior housing facilities, within the surrounding area. Staff also performs direct outreach by handing out printed materials at subway entrances and at the Putnam Triangle. Special events are advertised in local papers, on the center's website and in the center's central lobby. The DFTA representative noted its undertaking of a number of initiatives in order to boost seniors' awareness of the programming at the center. The representative for DFTA confirmed that this is an area that needs the senior center facility and services to remain open as it is the only funded senior center within a close proximity.

The DCAS representative clarified that there is one lease for both agency services within this building. DCAS has approached the landlord multiple times regarding including language in the lease to provide the City the option to renew at the end of the proposed ten year lease, though the landlord has consistently rejected the idea. DCAS will continue its efforts to negotiate the inclusion of the option to renew, for an additional ten years. There is a scope of work for the lease renewal which reflects the landlord's responsibilities and maintenance standards for the rooftop playground, ADA work, cosmetic touch-ups, and floor repairs. The lease renewal will include language which provides the landlord with a timeframe within which the specified scopes of work must be performed. In the case that the landlord fails to perform, the City as an agent of the landlord has the right to perform such tasks and deduct associated expenses from the rent payment.

In response to the Borough President's interest in furthering beautification and activation of the streetscape fronting this building, in order to contribute to FAB's efforts of enhancing the Fulton Street retail corridor, it was stated that the lease payment includes the Fulton Avenue BID fees, through the Department of Finance. The center has also been involved with FAB directly, as they are on the FAB board, and have worked with FAB and Department of Transportation (DOT) towards enhancing the Putnam Triangle, located across the street.

The representative stated that both ACS and DFTA look forward to continue working with the center, FAB, and DOT to continue energizing the corridor.

In response to the Borough President's interest in promoting locally-based hiring, the ACS representative stated that the day care center reaches out to education programs of nearby colleges and institutes. Outreach for all positions within the center is also performed through the union's website and the center's own website.

Considerations

Community Board 2 (CB 2) unanimously approved the motion to waive their opportunity to comment on this application with the intent to expedite the execution of the new lease.

The facilities on this site have been operated by ACS and DFTA since the early 1970s. The childcare and senior center facilities are housed in a three story building which contains approximately 44,250sf of floor area, including two rooftop play areas. The center is conveniently accessible by multiple modes of public transportation. Through this acquisition and lease renewal, an average of 115 children and over 100 seniors are expected to continue receiving services that promote education, social wellbeing and physical health.

The childcare center occupies approximately 26,000sf of the building, spread over the second and third floors as well as rooftop areas. The second floor provides an all preschool space while the third floor is dedicated for the after school children. The roof is accessible for all children. The center provides a variety of activities, programs, and services such as meal service, supervised playtime and education. The childcare program staff consists of approximately 23 professional, para-professional and support staff.

The senior center occupies approximately 18,000sf of the building, spread over the first floor and the cellar, which are ADA compliant. The center provides a meal service, serving an average 70 congregate lunches per day and 30 congregate dinners per day (on Wednesdays and Thursdays). The center also provides social services, transportation and social activities which consist of a wide range of educational and recreational programs and activities for the seniors, including health promotion and nutrition education. The senior center staff consists of approximately 10 employees.

The Borough President generally supports land use actions that seek to support the continuation of businesses and community facilities that provide services to all Brooklynites. Through this land acquisition and lease renewal, up to 115 children and 95 seniors will be able to continue receiving full-time educational and social programs.

In addition, this center serves an important role in the local economy by generating approximately 33 local jobs. The continuation of this center will not only secure its current workforce, it will continue to enable the parents of the enrolled children to maintain their own employment with the understanding that their children are being provided for during the workday.

The Borough President believes it is vital for households and senior community members to have easy access to community amenities such as daycare and senior services to take advantage of their locally-based facilities. He suggests that, as part of its outreach process, the Grace Harewood Senior Center and Young Minds Daycare Center consult with CB 2 and local elected officials to reach as many locally-based families as possible.

Though the Borough President is generally supportive of the proposed acquisition and lease renewal, he has concerns regarding the duration of the lease. Furthermore, he believes there are opportunities to continue to improve the condition and vibrancy of the building's street frontage, including requiring non-residential ground floor use along this section of Fulton Street. In addition, the Borough President has identified underutilized air rights of the adjacent Post Office site that could be developed for much needed affordable housing.

Lease Duration

The Borough President is very adamant about protecting and preserving critical community space for the Brooklyn's young and young at heart, and is concerned about the short term leases for such facilities. As more areas of Brooklyn become magnets for real estate development, the Borough President is concerned that landlords might elect to pursue potentially more lucrative uses resulting in discontinuing use as child care and senior centers. The Borough President has already witnessed this profit-seeking practice in other parts of Brooklyn. Examples of such cases include the Swinging Sixties Senior Center and the Bushwick United Learning Center, both located in Williamsburg. The new property owner of the Swinging Sixties Senior Center has recently attempted to displace the center – which has served the community for decades – for redevelopment opportunities that would without a doubt prove more lucrative. While the long-standing Bushwick United Learning Center, which served on average 110 children of low income families, was recently shut down after an overdrawn eviction battle with the landlord when their most recent 10 year lease ran out and the City failed to complete proper lease renewal paperwork in a timely manner.

It is the Borough President's policy for the City to secure fair lease-renewal terms which allow the City the ability to secure terms no less than ten years, inclusive of multiple shorter term leases and the right for renewal of the lease for an additional ten year term.

It is imperative that the City take actions through its land use process to adequately demonstrate, to the community, that the City is truly the community's partner, through securing facilities for such much needed programming. Whether provided directly through the City or through non-profits, the Clinton Hill community has a legitimate need for supportive services that work to enhance the lives of area residents.

The Borough President supports the efforts of ACS to continue to compel the landlord to accept a lease that grants the City the ability to renew the lease for an additional period of ten years. He believes that a long-term lease guarantees that Grace Harewood Senior Center and Young Minds Daycare Center would not fall victim to discretionary profit-seeking actions by the landlord and ensure the facility remain a community benefit for decades to come. Should DCAS be unsuccessful in negotiating a lease renewal provision, it should seek the inclusion of a provision for the right of first refusal within the lease if the property is marketed for sale.

Streetscape Improvement

The Borough President's policy is to make neighborhoods more vibrant and more welcoming for the pedestrian through various street beautification measures. He believes that sidewalks with nominal landscaping are potential resources that should be transformed through planting additional trees and/or providing street planters. This section of Fulton Street falls within FAB where there have been ongoing efforts to enhance the Fulton Street shopping experience by promoting a safe, lively and inviting atmosphere for both shoppers and pedestrians. The Borough President shares the position of the Executive Director of FAB

that there may be street scape improvement opportunities such as: sprucing up the existing tree pits with tree guards and tree pit plantings; accommodating one or more additional trees and/or providing street planters and/or street furniture, including benches near the curb; creating a green wall along the façade of the building; and, installing an awning along the length of the building to beautify the façade and provide shade and shelter for both children and seniors. Additional actions to create a more vibrant atmosphere along Fulton Street might be achieved through the exploration of street activation, including fundraising opportunities secured by obtaining permits for weekly sidewalk arts, crafts, and baked goods sales, and creating a GrowNYC Youth Market.

DCAS should consider which of these enhancements might be best achieved and/or maintained by the landlord pursuant to the lease agreement. Installation of the trees or planters would need to be coordinated with the Department of Parks and Recreation and DOT. Street furniture would need to be coordinated by DOT. All such enhancements should be considered in consultation with CB 2, FAB and local elected officials.

Ground Floor Uses Along Fulton Street

The Grace Harewood Senior Center and Young Minds Daycare Center site is located within FAB Business Improvement District where there have been ongoing efforts to enhance the Fulton Street shopping district. The goal of FAB is to turn Fulton Street into a lively mixed-use retail corridor with a vibrant mix of commercial and community facilities on the ground floor of all new developments.

Ground floor retail provides opportunities for pedestrians to look inside at merchandise and activity in a manner that makes a more interesting experience when strolling along a retail corridor. Interesting corridors often result in more foot-traffic that support retailers while providing more eyes on the street as a means to enhance a feeling of being safe in the neighborhood. This is further enhanced when lighting from stores supplements the City's street lights. By providing a more active street front, commercial ground floor space has the potential to not only activate the street but also provide more pedestrian foot traffic and an overall brighter, livelier and safer atmosphere.

The Borough President believes that any future developments should be required to provide appropriate and inviting non-residential use and transparent facades at the ground floor level, consistent with the standards of the Zoning Resolution's Special Enhanced Commercial District.

He believes that the Department of Small Business Services or the Department of City Planning should give consideration to advancing a zoning text amendment of the Fort Greene and Clinton Hill sections of Fulton Street in consultation with CB 2, FAB and local elected officials.

Identification of Government Property to Further Affordable Housing and Community Development Opportunities in this Section of Clinton Hill:

The Borough President supports the Mayor's goal to achieve 200,000 affordable housing units over the next decade. It is one of the Borough President's policies to support effective ways to create more affordable housing. He also believes that it is important to take into consideration each individual community's needs in order to properly meet their specific demands. Among the Borough President's policies is to support effective ways to create community facilities, where necessary.

The residents of Brooklyn continue to face significant increases in rents, ultimately resulting in residential displacement. Therefore, it is crucial to continue identifying additional, more creative, opportunities for people to affordably remain within their neighborhoods. In response to the Mayor's *Housing New York: a Five-Borough, Ten-Year Plan*, in November 2014 the Borough President produced a report titled the *Housing Brooklyn: A Road Map to Real Affordability for Brooklynites*. The report discusses key opportunities for affordable housing development throughout Brooklyn in order to help achieve the Mayor's development goals. The report outlines important steps that need to be taken to give more residents the opportunity to secure quality affordable housing. One such method is to identify potential government-owned land that can be utilized for private residential development in order to help realize the much needed affordable housing in a manner that maximizes affordability to existing neighborhood residents.

Taking into consideration to borough's growing population, given the scarcity of available land for development, without proper planning and mitigation there could be significantly adverse impacts not only on the affordable housing resource but on the various community facilities as well. Government-owned land should be a resource used to provide for a variety of services within the community, such as schools, public parks, community facilities and other municipal needs.

The existing unused development rights from the two adjacent Post Office tax lots with excess development rights are one such government owned resource that should provide additional community benefit. The Borough President believes there is an opportunity for the City to collaborate with the United States Postal Service to realize a state-of-the-art postal facility while producing much needed affordable housing (approximately 20 units) and/or accommodating a community use.

Recommendation

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 land use action requested.

Be it further resolved that:

1. That Department of Citywide Administrative Services continues its negotiations with the landlord in order to:
 - a. secure a right for renewal of the lease for an additional 10 year term;
 - b. include a provision of the right of first refusal within the lease if the property is marketed for sale, and;
 - c. determine what type of building frontage improvements should be included in the lease, such as a new awning the length of the building, provision of street furniture and street plantings; items beyond the scope of the lease should be pursued through coordination with the Parks Department and Department of Transportation.
2. That the Department of Parks and Recreation give consideration to providing tree pit enhancements and/or additional street trees and/or plantings, and the Department of Transportation provide curb side seating, both in consultation with Community Board 2, Fulton Area Business Alliance and local elected officials.

3. That the Department of Small Business Services or the Department of City Planning should give consideration to advancing a zoning text amendment of the Fort Greene and Clinton Hill sections of Fulton Street in consultation with Community Board 2, Fulton Area Business Alliance and local elected officials.
4. That the City should collaborate with the United States Postal Service to realize a state-of-the-art postal facility while producing much needed affordable housing and/or community use.