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Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) Application

2118 AVENUE U – C230351ZMK, N230352ZRK

IN THE MATTER OF a private application by 2118 Avenue U LLC for a zoning map amendment, and zoning text amendment to facilitate the development of a new four-story mixed-use building of approximately 20,450 square feet being sought at 2118 Avenue U in Sheepshead Bay, Community District 15, Brooklyn

BROOKLYN COMMUNITY DISTRICT 15

RECOMMENDATION

☐ APPROVE
☒ APPROVE WITH MODIFICATIONS/CONDITIONS
☐ DISAPPROVE
☐ DISAPPROVE WITH MODIFICATIONS/CONDITIONS

RECOMMENDATION FOR: 2118 AVENUE U – C230351ZMK, N230352ZRK

The Project Area is along Avenue U, a mixed-use corridor within an R4 residential district in Sheepshead Bay in southern Brooklyn. This residential district allows for low-rise attached houses, small multifamily apartment houses, and detached and semi-detached one-and two-family residences. Avenue U is also mapped with a C1-3 commercial overlay, which allows for local retail uses but is governed by the bulk regulations of the R4 residential district. Much of this portion of Avenue U is overbuilt, with two- to four-story mixed-use buildings with high lot coverage far exceeding the 0.75 floor area ratio (FAR) allowed in R4 districts. The surrounding area also includes a higher density corridor along Ocean Avenue, which was mapped as R7A and R4-1 contextual districts in the 2006 Homecrest Rezoning.

The Project Area comprises seven lots. Two of these lots, including the proposed Development Site, are corner lots along Avenue U that include ground floor commercial uses. The applicant is proposing to rezone these lots to from R4/C1-3 to R6/C2-4. This change would legalize the existing building at the corner of Avenue U and E 21st Street and facilitate the development of a new four-story mixed-use development at the Development Site on the corner of Avenue U and E 22nd Street. The Development Site is currently a vacant one-story commercial storefront.

The other five lots in the Project Area are interior lots with two-story residential buildings fronting E 21st Street and E 22nd Street. The applicant is proposing to remove the existing C1-3 overlay to better reflect their residential character.

The proposed actions would facilitate the development of a four-story plus penthouse mixed-use development with 4,800 square feet of commercial floor area on the ground floor and 15,650 square feet of residential floor area. The proposed development would include 10 dwelling units, three of which would be affordable under Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) Option 1. The proposed development would have a FAR of 3.41, less than the 3.6 FAR permitted under the proposed R6 district.

The proposed development would include 10 accessory parking spaces in the cellar level, resulting in a 1:1 ratio of parking spaces to dwelling units. The Project Area is served by public transit, including the Q train at the Avenue U station six blocks to the west and the B3 bus route, which runs east-west along Avenue U. Despite the proximity to transit, the Project Area is located one block outside of the Transit Zone. The proposed parking is being voluntarily provided by the applicant; as the required parking is fewer than 15 spaces, the applicant has the option to waive out of parking requirements altogether.

Borough President Reynoso held a public hearing on this application on March 26, 2024. No members of the public testified or submitted written testimony.

Community Board Position

Community Board 15 voted to approve this application on February 27, 2024. While no conditions were included in the recommendation, the applicant has stated that they worked with the Community Board to come to an agreement on the size of the proposed development prior to the formal beginning of public review.

Approval Rationale

Borough President Reynoso believes the proposed actions are appropriate. The proposed R6 district better reflects the land uses and bulk already present along Avenue U and will provide sorely needed housing in a part of the borough where few units have been built. As such, this project is in alignment with the Housing Growth and Parking Demand Management framework of the Comprehensive Plan for Brooklyn, particularly Rec. 2.1.1(b), which supports proposed increases in density in areas where housing production has been lagging.

Borough President Reynoso believes the proposed development should be adjusted to fully take advantage of the proposed allowable FAR, include more residential units, and reduce the number of accessory parking spaces. During the public review process, the applicant stated that they had originally proposed a six-story building with 18 total units, five of which would be affordable under MIH. Borough President Reynoso requests that the applicant revert to this proposal. A six-story project would advance the Comprehensive Plan objective to support transit-oriented development, namely Rec. 2.2.4, which encourages developers to use all allowable FAR and seek parking waivers to maximize housing unit production near transit.

During the review session at the City Planning Commission (CPC), Chair Garodnick cited this application as an exemplar of two proposals in the forthcoming City of Yes for Housing Opportunity zoning text amendment. First, he cited this project as a case where a developer may choose to provide parking even when not required. Borough President Reynoso finds such a development scenario concerning; mixed-use, multi-family housing within a half-mile of transit should not have a 1:1 ratio of parking spaces to residential units. If such an outcome is possible under the banner of “transit-oriented” proposals, additional proposals such as maximum parking allowances and other transportation demand management strategies may be appropriate.

Second, the Chair cited this application as an example of the "town center zoning" proposal, wherein all lots within commercial overlays will be able to build up to five stories of residential floor area as-of-right. As discussed above, this is broadly aligned with the Borough President's Housing Growth and Parking Demand Management framework in the Comprehensive Plan for Brooklyn. The Project Area for this application is on the cusp of the "transit node" and "residential core" areas illustrated in the framework, which call for higher residential density, concentration of accessible neighborhood facilities, and parking demand management strategies such as metered commercial parking and residential parking permits.

Recommendation

Be it resolved that the Brooklyn Borough President, pursuant to Sections 197-c and 201 of the New York City Charter, recommends that the City Planning Commission and City Council approve this application with the conditions that:

1) The residential floor area (FAR) and unit count in the proposed development is increased to take full advantage of the allowable FAR.
2) The applicant consider fully waiving the proposed parking, but at maximum, should not include more than six spaces.

April 1, 2024

BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT | DATE