

BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION
ULURP APPLICATION NO: C 210063 ZMX
St. Joseph's - 1949 Bathgate Avenue

DOCKET DESCRIPTION

IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by St. Joseph's Apartment's LLC pursuant to Section 197-c and 201 of the New York City Charter for an amendment of the Zoning Map Section No. 3d, by changing from an R6A District to an R7D District property bounded by East 178th Street, Bathgate Avenue, a line 220 feet southerly of East 178th Street, and Washington Avenue, Borough of The Bronx, Community District #6, as shown on a diagram (for illustrative purposes only) dated March 1, 2021, and subject to the conditions of CEQR Declaration E-602.

BACKGROUND

Approval of this application will amend the Zoning Map by changing an existing R6A District to the proposed R7D District. Referred to as the "Project Area" this includes Block 3043, Lots 10, 16, 22 and 23 which are owned by the applicant. Also included in the Project Area are four-foot slivers of Lots 8 and 30 which are not applicant-owned. Lot 8 is improved with a 4-story office building and Lot 30 is improved with a 3-story building accommodating a parochial school. This building originally served as the headquarters for the 48th Police Precinct. The Project Area is located on the southwest corner of Bathgate Avenue at East 178th Street, between Washington Avenue to the west, Third Avenue to the east, East 179th Street on the north and East Tremont Avenue to the south.

Referred to as the "Development Site" is Block 3043, Lots 10, 16, 22 and 23. It is composed of 40,104 square feet of vacant property. It offers 216 feet of frontage on Washington Avenue, 186 feet of frontage on East 178th Street and 216 feet of frontage on Bathgate Avenue. The topography of the development site includes a significant grade change. The highest elevation is on the northeast corner of Bathgate Avenue at East 178th Street, measuring 78.91. The lowest elevation is at the corner of Washington Avenue at East 178th Street, measuring 59.30, approximately twenty feet lower. This property is the former site of St. Joseph's Church.

The applicant proposes to construct an eleven story residential building (96 feet) with an FAR of 5.59. To mitigate the impact of the building's height, its 8th story will be setback 15-feet, yielding a combined area of 2,600 square feet (1,300 square feet in each wing) of space for plantings. This area will not be accessible to residents. The building will offer a total of 287 units of housing, composed of 224,576 square feet of zoning floor area including:

- 130 units of supportive housing managed by Beacon of Hope and New York Foundling
 - 70 units will be assigned to Beacon of Hope
 - 60 units will be assigned to New York Foundling
- 157 units of low income housing (40%-70%) Area Median Income (AMI).

Beacon of Hope assists those plagued by substance abuse and/or mental illness. In 2020 the Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative awarded Beacon of Hope to provide support for 70 individuals who will reside at the proposed St. Joseph's-1949 Bathgate Avenue residence.

New York Foundling is a long established organization offering assistance to those in foster care, aging out of foster care, and those with development disabilities. The mission of New York Foundling is to guide those under its care to find stability, strength and independence and by so doing avoid pitfalls that may lead to among other things, homelessness. In 2020 the Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative awarded New York Foundling support for the care of 40 individuals aging out of foster care and 20 individuals with developmental disabilities, who will reside at St. Joseph's-1949 Bathgate Avenue.

Those under the care of either Beacon of Hope or New York Foundling will be charged rent not to exceed 30% of a resident's gross income. So too, these units will accommodate a maximum of one resident. Of the remaining 157 units of affordable housing, this balance will be made available to families whose incomes range between 40% to 70% AMI.

The proposed building will consist of two wings, sharing a common lobby and outdoor area for passive recreation. This garden area will approximate 10,000 square feet and define the "center-point" between the two wings. It will be accessible exclusively to residents and their guests. Each of the two wings will be managed 24/7 by either Beacon of Hope or New York Foundling. Separate programming will be provided within each wing by either of the two organizations. Units being made available to the general public include:

- 25 Studio Units measuring 350-450 gross square feet
- 37 1-Bedroom Units measuring 550-700 gross square feet
- 50 2-Bedroom Units measuring 700-900 gross square feet
- 45 3-Bedroom Units measuring 734-1,000 gross square feet
- 1 Superintendent Unit

As a result of the mapping a Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH), a minimum of 64-units will comply with MIH affordability Options 1 and 2 and remain so in perpetuity.

The anticipated rent will reflect the 40%-70% AMI:

- Studio Units: \$ 722--\$1,319 per month
- 1-Bedroom: \$ 769--\$1,409 per month
- 2-Bedrooms: \$ 914--\$1,682 per month
- 3-Bedrooms: \$1,046-\$1,933 per month

The two wings will share a common roof area composed of 14,000 square feet. An array of solar panels will be installed on a majority of this roof area thereby dramatically reducing common area utility expenses.

Additional amenities include:

- Bicycle room
- Laundry room
- Life Skills room
- Community room
- Community facility space potentially accessible from the street

This proposed development is located within a transit zone. Consequently off-street parking is not mandated and will not be provided.

Development of the surrounding community is typified by low-to-midrise residential buildings, including one and two family wood-frame homes. The Tremont United Methodist Church is located on the southwest corner of Washington Avenue at East 178th Street, directly opposite the Development Site. Commercial activity is found on East Tremont Avenue, Third Avenue and on Webster Avenue. Bus transportation via the Bx 15 operates on Third Avenue. The Bx40 and Bx42 operates on East Tremont Avenue. The Bx 41 runs on Webster Avenue. There is no subway services available within a five block radius of this site. Metro North Commuter Railroad offers accessibility on Park Avenue at East Tremont Avenue approximately four blocks west of the Development Site.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND ULURP CERTIFICATION

This application has been reviewed pursuant to SEQR and CEQR and received a Negative Declaration. The City Planning Commission certified this application as complete on March 1, 2021.

BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD PUBLIC HEARING

A virtual public hearing was held by Bronx Community District #6 on March 10, 2021. A unanimous vote recommending approval of this application was 22 in favor, zero opposed and zero abstaining.

BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S PUBLIC HEARING

A virtual public hearing was convened by the Bronx Borough President on April 6, 2021. Those representing the applicant were present and spoke in favor of this application. There being no others wishing to speak on this matter the hearing was closed.

BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION

It is the exception when one development proposal addresses the needs of three sectors of our community: those suffering from mental challenges and addiction, those who have no family and as such require foster care and those whose modest income is not sufficient to offer access to quality residential accommodation. It is therefore with much enthusiasm that I recommend this application be approved as by so doing will address all three of these needs and facilitate construction of St. Joseph's-1949 Bathgate Avenue.

Catholic Charities Community Services, Beacon of Hope, and New York Foundling are three organizations that share a commendable history of addressing the needs of our most needy citizens. Here, they are collaborating to construct a place where domestic stability coupled with a full range of medical care and ongoing programs designed to meet the needs of a specific resident can make a profound difference in the lives of those who will call 1949 Bathgate Avenue their home. I am also confident that those families who will reside here will enjoy the many benefits of a modern and well maintained facility and that every measure to assure their security will be taken.

I also want to commend the architect associated with this project. Taking full advantage of the site's topography, coupled with setbacks, minimizes the impact of this 11-story building where most surrounding development includes low-to-midrise buildings. So too, where the proposed building stands at Washington Avenue at East 178th Street, by incorporating glass rather than brick folks will be invited to stroll by as the area will benefit from the ambient light of what will be located within the building.

I am especially pleased to comment on the number of 2 and 3-bedroom units to be included. Numbering a total of 95 units (50 two bedrooms, 45 three bedrooms) this project offers younger families the space to raise children; a need that is too often not addressed in favor of increasing the overall unit count in a building.

Recognizing the unanimous recommendation this application was received from Bronx Community Board #6, I too recommend approval of this application.