61-10 Queens Boulevard Rezoning
61-10 Queens Boulevard
8/30/22

1. Introduction

This is an application on behalf of PF Supreme, LLC (d/b/a Planet Fitness) (the "Applicant"), lessee of certain space on the second floor of the building (the "Existing Building") on the property located at 61-10 Queens Boulevard (Queens Block 2314, Lot 100) (the "Property" or the "Development Site"), for a zoning map amendment to Zoning Map 9d to rezone the Property's blockfront along Queens Boulevard encompassing the Property and a portion of one adjacent tax lot (Lot 1) (the "Project Area") in existing R7-1/C1-2 and R6/C1-2 districts to R7-1/C2-4 and R6/C2-4 districts. The rezoning is sought so the Applicant can have an approximately 16,000 square-foot ("SF") Use Group 9 health and fitness establishment on a portion of the Existing Building's second floor (with a ground floor entrance), which is permitted as of right in a C2 district. If the Existing Building remained in a C1 district, the Applicant would have a health and fitness establishment of 10,000 SF of floor area, since such establishments are limited to 10,000 SF of floor area in C1 districts (Use Group 6).

2. Background

The Project Area was mapped with an R6 district that spanned both sides of Queens Boulevard with the adoption of the Zoning Resolution in 1961. To the north of Queens Boulevard, the district encompassed several blocks up to Roosevelt Avenue between 50th Street to the west and 63rd Street to the east. To the south of Queens Boulevard, the district stretched towards the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway and was bounded by New Calvary Cemetery to the west and 61st Street to the east. This portion of Queens Boulevard was not initially mapped with extensive commercial districts, though portions of the corridor were mapped with C8-1 districts on either side of the Project Area and a few block fronts included C2-4 overlay districts to the east of the Project Area on the north side of the corridor. On the southern side of Queens Boulevard, commercial overlays were mapped on three blocks adjacent to the Project Area to the east in 1962 (CP 17452) to facilitate a commercial development by a private applicant and to better reflect the existing commercial and manufacturing land uses of the time. The Project Area was mapped with a C1-2 overlay in 1964 (CP 18660) to facilitate the shopping center that the Development Site is located in, which was envisioned to primarily serve residents of the Big Six co-op development.

The Big Six residential development was built in 1963 by Typographical Union Local No. 6 as part of the Mitchell Llama program for affordable co-op housing for middle-income residents. There are 988 units located within 7 residential towers on 12 acres between Queens Boulevard and Laurel Hill Boulevard and 59th and 61st Streets.

In the following years, residential density along Queens Boulevard was incrementally increased through rezonings around and within the Project Area. The R6 district was extended to the adjacent block front on Queens Boulevard to the east of the Project Area in 1976 (CP 23139) to

facilitate a mixed-use development including 60 efficiency apartments for seniors, a synagogue, and a community center intended to serve the Jewish population living in the Big Six towers. In 1989, an R8 district was mapped on the adjacent block front to the west of the Project Area and part of the Project Area fronting on Queens Boulevard was mapped with an R7 district (C 880941) to facilitate a mixed-use, 19-story residential tower with space for a public school, medical office, retail, and parking. At this time, a C1-2 commercial overlay was also mapped at a depth of 150 feet from Queens Boulevard on the same blocks as the R7 and R8 rezonings. These rezonings facilitated a transition from low-scale, auto-oriented commercial and manufacturing land uses to a mix of high-density residential uses with strong retail and community facility components on this portion of Queens Boulevard.

In 2011, the Sunnyside-Woodside Rezoning (C 110207 ZMQ) was enacted, which affected a large area several blocks west and north of the Project Area, including Queens Boulevard between 39th Place and 50th Street. This rezoning from R4, R5, R6, R7-1, C4-2, C8-1 and M1-1 districts to R4, R4-1, R5B, R5D, R6A, R7A, R7X and C4-5X districts, and updating of certain commercial overlay districts, was intended to protect neighborhood character from out-of-scale development, more closely reflect established development patterns, direct opportunities for moderate residential and commercial growth to locations along wide streets and transit resources, and provide incentives for the production of affordable housing. Consistent with the rezoning's purpose to, among other things, direct growth towards wide streets, the areas where density was reduced were not located along Queens Boulevard.

The Health and Fitness Citywide Text Amendment (N 210382 ZRY) was enacted by the City Council on December 9, 2021, allowing health and fitness establishments limited to 10,000 SF of floor area per establishment as of right in a C1 district (Use Group 6) and health and fitness establishments without any limitation as to floor area as of right in a C2 district (Use Group 9), eliminating the need for a special permit from the Board of Standards and Appeals. Consequently, the Applicant proposes an amendment to the Zoning Map that would place the Property in a C2-4 district so it can use its entire 16,000 SF space as a health and fitness establishment.

In the Property's C1-2 district, historically a health and fitness establishment has not been permitted because the BSA had no jurisdiction to grant special permits for "physical culture establishments" in C1 districts. However, we understand that a gym has been in the space since the early 1990's (mostly a Gold's Gym) although the space has been unoccupied for the last few years.

3. Description of the Surrounding Area

The Project Area is in Queens Community Board 2 in the neighborhood of Woodside. The neighborhood is characterized by a broad mix of land uses, residential densities, and street types influenced by the 200-foot-wide Queens Boulevard, a major commercial corridor spanning the breadth of Queens and connecting Manhattan to Long Island. Three major transportation corridors, including Queens Boulevard, the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway, and the Long Island

Railroad (LIRR), all intersect approximately three blocks to the east of the Project Area. The Brooklyn-Queens Expressway, which is sunken below the grade of Queens Boulevard, traverses the neighborhood from northeast to the southwest. The LIRR cuts through the neighborhood from northwest to southeast on an elevated structure. Generally, commercial uses and tall residential buildings are located on Queens Boulevard with the broader neighborhood being characterized by a mix of row houses, two-family detached and semi-detached homes, multifamily walk-up buildings and apartment buildings. Calvary Cemetery, located two blocks west of the Project Area, is one of several large cemeteries situated near the border of Queens and Brooklyn.

This portion of Queens Boulevard is mapped with an R7-1, an R7X, and an R8 district generally extending 100 feet from Queens Boulevard with C1-2 and C1-3 commercial overlays. These zoning districts have facilitated residential towers and retail uses along Queens Boulevard. Developments include (i) an 8-story, approximately 157,000 SF mixed-use building at 58-12 Queens Boulevard immediately west of the Project Area constructed in 1998, with a supermarket and office-supply store and other commercial and community facility uses on its lowest two floors, (ii) an 8-story, approximately 123,000 SF mixed-use building at 63-14 Queens Boulevard immediately east of the Project Area constructed in 2008, with several local convenience retail establishments such as a pizzeria and liquor store on the ground floor, and (iii) an 8-story, approximately 26,000 SF mixed-use building at 64-24 Queens Boulevard two blocks east of the Project Area constructed in 2015, with a retail store on its lowest level.

Consistent with its underlying zoning, the land uses in the portion of the neighborhood in the vicinity of the Project Area are a mix of residential and commercial uses, primarily consisting of multifamily residences, mixed commercial and residential buildings, commercial/office buildings, and parking facilities. Built form in the area varies by use, and generally consists of low-rise commercial buildings with local retail or office uses, and 3- to 18-story multi-family residential buildings. Immediately adjacent to the Development Site, on the same block, are five of the Big Six 18-story residential towers, built in a "tower in a park" configuration with planted open spaces and accessory parking areas. Across Queens Boulevard to the north, the most prominent use is the 8-story Queens Boulevard Extended Care Facility, along with predominantly residential buildings that are generally 7-stories tall.

Major thoroughfares in the surrounding area are Queens Boulevard, and the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway to the south and east. The closest subway line is the 7-train, which is accessible via the 61st Street-Woodside Station, located approximately a quarter of a mile to the north of the Project Area. The LIRR is also accessible via the Woodside Station, which is located adjacent to the 7-train station on 61st Street. Bus routes in the surrounding area include the Q60, which runs along Queens Boulevard between Jamaica and midtown Manhattan, and the Q18, which runs along 65th Place and Laurel Boulevard between Astoria and Maspeth.

The nearest open space to the Project Area is the Big Bush Playground, which is located a block to the southeast and contains 2.5 acres of recreation space including a soccer field, courts for handball and basketball, fitness equipment, and play equipment for children. Doughboy Plaza and Lawrence Virgilio Playground are located approximately three-quarters of a mile to the

north of the Project Area and include a playground, basketball courts, running track, and seasonal outdoor pool. Schools near the Project Area include ABC Preschool and Kindergarten Center, located approximately a half-mile to the east, Razi School, a kindergarten located approximately a half-mile to the west, and Greater New York Academy of Seventh Day Adventists, a high school located approximately a half-mile to the northwest. Additionally, Calvary Cemetery is located two blocks west of the Project Area and contains 365 acres of space.

4. Description of the Proposed Project Area

The Project Area encompasses the portion of Block 2314 within 175 feet of the south side of Queens Boulevard (a 200-foot wide "wide" street) that is mapped with the C1-2 overlay, between 59th Street to the west (a 60-foot wide "narrow" street) and 61st Street to the east (a 50-foot wide "narrow" street), having a total of 927.79 linear feet of frontage on Queens Boulevard. Within 100 feet of Queens Boulevard, the Project Area is in an R7-1 district, and the remaining 75 feet is in an R6 district. The Project Area consists of the Development Site (discussed below) and a portion of one other tax lot, Lot 1 (59-10 Queens Boulevard). Lot 1 has approximately 525 feet of frontage on Queens Boulevard and a lot area of approximately 286,000 SF (of which approximately 92,000 SF is within the Project Area). Lot 1 contains five of the Big Six 18-story residential towers, built in the 1960s, with a total of approximately 700,000 SF of floor area (built to an FAR of approximately 2.5) and over 700 dwelling units. Two of the towers are within the Project Area, along with planted open space and accessory parking areas, accessed by three curb cuts from Queens Boulevard.

5. Description of Proposed Development Site (if different than the Project Area)

The Development Site, which is part of the Big Six complex, is on the southwest corner of Queens Boulevard and 61st Street, with 402.11 feet of frontage and depths of 173-174.41 feet, and a lot area of approximately 68,000 SF. It is improved with the Existing Building, which is two-stories plus a cellar (30 feet tall), built in the 1960s and having approximately 65,000 SF of floor area (built to approximately 0.96 FAR). There is no final certificate of occupancy on the Department of Buildings' website. The most recent temporary certificate of occupancy, which expired in May 2021, permits Use Group 6C stores and storage in the cellar, Use Group 6A food stores, stores and parking on the first floor, Use Group 6B offices and Use Group 6C stores on the second floor, and 148 parking spaces on the roof. The temporary certificate of occupancy also references 3 loading berths and states that 238 parking spaces are required and 241 are provided, noting 22 attended parking spaces at grade with 43 self-parking spaces, and 28 self-parking spaces on the adjacent lot (Lot 1). The Development Site has a curb cut at its western edge along Queens Boulevard (midblock) providing access to the parking spaces and loading berths.

The Development Site is located within a shopping center that includes a supermarket (Key Food) and various local convenience retail establishments, including shoe repair, cleaners, pizzeria, nail salon, delicatessen and a pharmacy.

6. Description of the Proposed Development

No changes to the bulk of the Existing Building or Project Area is proposed. The proposed rezoning to a C2-4 district would allow the Planet Fitness gym to occupy approximately 16,000 SF on a portion of the second floor, as permitted as of right in C2 districts. The gym would provide the residents of the community, especially the Big Six towers, an easily accessible and convenient place to engage in physical activity and exercise, critical components to a healthy lifestyle and overall well-being.

Over the past two decades, Planet Fitness has invested significant resources to provide affordable fitness for the Borough of Queens. As a result, Planet Fitness is the largest fitness chain within New York City, with locations spread across all five boroughs. The core value of the Planet Fitness brand is inclusivity – their gyms are "judgment free zones" that provide a high-quality fitness experience at an affordable cost most often with convenient 24-hour access, with membership for as low as $10 per month and opportunities for free fitness training in a community in which people of all different backgrounds and abilities are welcome.

7. Action(s) Necessary to Facilitate the Project

The Applicant proposes a zoning map amendment to Zoning Map 9d to change the C1-2 commercial overlay on the Property's block to a C2-4 commercial overlay, leaving the current R7-1 and R6 districts in place.

Both the C1-2 and C2-4 overlays within the R6 and R7 districts permit commercial uses of up to 2.0 FAR (ZR Section 33-121) (but limited to the ground floor in buildings with residential or community facility uses above) (ZR Section 32-421). In C1-2 commercial overlays, only Use Group 6 commercial uses are permitted as of right (primarily local retail stores and personal service establishments such as restaurants and supermarkets). In C2-4 commercial overlays, commercial uses in Use Groups 6-9 and 14 are permitted (ZR Section 32-00). The additional uses permitted in C2-4 commercial overlays consist of home maintenance (Use Group 7), amusements including theaters (Use Group 8), businesses and other services that serve a large area and are also appropriate in local service districts, such as catering and clothing/costume rental establishments (Use Group 9), and candy and ice cream stores and facilities required for boating and related activities (Use Group 14). Parking requirements are 1 space per 300 square feet of floor area for most commercial uses in the C1-2 district, while they are 1 space per 1,000 square feet in the C2-4 district (ZR Section 36-21).

The rezoning is proposed to leverage the Health and Fitness Citywide Text Amendment that was recently enacted to provide a larger fitness facility for the large residential population in the vicinity than would be allowed by the existing zoning. The Health and Fitness Citywide Text Amendment allows health and fitness establishments limited to 10,000 SF of floor area as of

right in a C1 district (Use Group 6) and health and fitness establishments without any limitation as to floor area as of right in a C2 district (Use Group 9). Consequently, the proposed rezoning would allow the Applicant to use its entire 16,000 SF space as a health and fitness establishment. Such an establishment would be of significant benefit to a neighborhood generally underserved by open space and lacking options for gyms or recreation centers in the immediate vicinity.

The C2 overlay would be consistent with the C2 overlay mapped along the entire blockfront directly to the north along Queens Boulevard across from the Project Area, which extends from 50th Street to approximately 73rd Street, as well as the C2 overlay mapped on the block directly to the east across 61st Street, which extends to 73rd Street.

No new floor area will be added to the Existing Building, and no changes to the Existing Building's envelope will be made. The Existing Building conforms with the R7-1/C2-4 and R6/C2-4 districts' regulations, as it contains approximately 0.96 FAR (less than the permitted 2 FAR for commercial uses per ZR Section 33-121) and complies with the height and setback regulations set forth in ZR Section 33-432, which limits commercial buildings to the lesser of two stories or 30 feet, as it is two stories and 30 feet high. Although parking requirements are not triggered by the proposed change of use, the reduction in parking requirements from the C1-2 overlay to the C2-4 overlay is appropriate given the site's location in the transit zone and proximity to mass transit.

8. Conclusion

The proposed rezoning to a C2-4 commercial overlay would allow the Applicant to have an approximately 16,000 SF health and fitness establishment on a portion of the second floor of the Existing Building as of right, rather than one limited to 10,000 SF of floor area as permitted as of right under the current C1-2 commercial overlay. The health and fitness establishment would afford residents of the community, particularly the Big Six towers, an opportunity to engage in physical activities of significant benefit to both bodily and psychological health, in an area that is currently generally underserved by public spaces for recreational activities. At the same time, the proposed rezoning would not result in out of character development as it would apply to the Project Area the same commercial bulk and use regulations that currently apply on several blocks across on the north side of Queens Boulevard, and directly to the east of the Project Area, which are also mapped with a C2 overlay.