21st STREET REZONING
ASTORIA, NEW YORK
LR ITEM 3 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

1. INTRODUCTION

Astoria Park Warehouse LLC (the "Applicant"), the owner of 21-01 24th Avenue (Block 876, Lots 12 and 14)("Development Site 1") and 21-16 24th Avenue (Block 874, Lot 70)("Development Site 2") in the Astoria neighborhood of Queens Community District 1, requests approval of the following two actions (the "Proposed Actions") from the New York City Planning Commission (the "CPC") and City Council:

1. A zoning map amendment to rezone portions of Block 876 and Block 874 (the "Rezoning Area") from R5D/C1-3 and R5B zoning districts to an R6A/C1-4 zoning district, and;

2. A zoning text amendment to ZR Appendix F to establish a Mandatory Inclusionary Housing ("MIH") Area.

The Proposed Actions would facilitate the redevelopment of two vacant sites with two new mixed-use residential and commercial (retail) buildings on Development Site 1 ("Proposed Development 1") and Development Site 2 ("Proposed Development 2"). In total, the proposed developments will introduce approximately 99,143 square feet of floor area (3.45 FAR), including approximately 84,287 square feet of residential floor area (92 dwelling units), 14,856 square feet of retail floor area on the ground-floor, and 41 accessory parking spaces. The proposed developments would contain a total of approximately 23 to 28 permanently affordable housing units pursuant to either MIH Option 1 or 2, respectively.

2. BACKGROUND

In 2002, a zoning map amendment was approved for the Eagle Electric Building (C 010185 ZMQ) located across 21st Street from Development Site 1. The zoning map amendment allowed for a change from R5 to R7A/C1-2. The zoning map amendment was intended to facilitate the conversion of the Eagle Electric factory and warehouse building to a higher-density mixed-use residential and commercial (retail) development. The site is currently occupied by a seven-story condominium building with ground-floor retail along 21st Street and a three-story condominium building along 19th Street adjacent to Astoria Park.

The Astoria Rezoning (C 100199 ZMQ), adopted by the City Council on May 25th, 2010, rezoned 238 blocks of Astoria from R4, R5, R6, and R6B districts to R4, R4-1, R4B, R5, R5B, R5D, R6A, R6B, R7A, C4-2A, C4-3, C4-4A districts. The proposal also included a zoning text amendment to make the Inclusionary Housing program applicable within R7A and C4-4A districts located along portions of Vernon Boulevard, 21st Street, and 31st Street. Development Site 1 was rezoned from R5/C1-2 and R5 to R5D/C1-3 and R5B and Development Site 2 was rezoned from R5 to R5B. The Astoria Rezoning was intended to allow modest increases in residential and commercial density in appropriate locations.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE SURROUNDING AREA

Land Uses

The area within a 600-foot radius of the Development Sites is primarily residential with commercial (retail) uses located along 24th Avenue, an 80-foot-wide street. The blocks to the north and east along 21st Street, a 100-foot-wide street, and 23rd Street, a 60-foot-wide narrow street, are generally comprised of a mix of one- and two-family homes and multi-family walkup buildings ranging in height from one to three stories. The area to the west includes the converted Eagle Electric factory and warehouse building, which was completed in 2008 and is now a seven-story condominium building with ground-floor retail along 21st Street and a three-story condominium building along 19th Street. Other recent developments in the area include 23-81

21st Street, a three-story residential building with 11 dwelling units and ground-floor retail constructed in 2018. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Queens Community District 1 has a median household income of approximately $74,900 and approximately 37.6 percent of area households are rent burdened.[1]

The surrounding area is well served by public transportation, including the Q69 and Q100 bus routes along 21st Street and the Q19 and M60 Select Bus Service routes along Hoyt Avenue. The Astoria Boulevard (N, W) subway station is located eight blocks (0.49 miles) to the east just beyond the surrounding area.

Other notable features in the surrounding area include Astoria Park, an approximately 60 acre regional park located to the west of 19th Street along the East River. The park features a number of amenities including athletic fields, a running track, basketball and tennis courts, playgrounds, an outdoor swimming pool, walking paths, lawns, seating areas, and landscaping. Beyond the surrounding area are several pieces of transportation infrastructure, including the Robert F. Kennedy Bridge, an elevated roadway located south of the Development Sites that spans the East River between Queens and the Bronx, as well as the Hell Gate Bridge, an elevated rail line utilized by Amtrak and Metro-North located to the north of the Development Sites.

Zoning

The primary zoning districts mapped within the surrounding area include R5B, R5D, and R7A. R5B zoning is mapped to the north and south of 24th Avenue. R5D is generally mapped along the blocks fronting 24th Avenue east of 21st Street. R7A is mapped across a one block area (Block 7501) to the west of the Development Sites. C1-2 and C1-3 commercial overlays are mapped along 21st Street.

The surrounding area is located within the Transit Zone, where lower accessory residential parking requirements apply for certain types of affordable housing, including income-restricted housing units. The surrounding area is also within an area where zoning incentives are available under the Food Retail Expansion to Support Health ("FRESH") Program.

R5B

R5B is a medium-density contextual residential zoning district that primarily results in three-story rowhouse buildings. R5B permits multi-family apartment buildings as well as detached and semi-detached one- and two-family buildings (Use Groups 1 and 2) and community facility uses (Use Groups 3 and 4). Industrial and manufacturing uses are not permitted. R5B districts allow a maximum FAR of 1.35 for residential uses. The street wall may rise to 30 feet before sloping or being set back to a maximum building height of 33 feet. A front yard must be at least five feet deep and cannot exceed a depth of 20 feet. Off-street parking is generally required for two-thirds of a building's dwelling units and no parking is required for income-restricted units within the Transit Zone.

R5D

R5D is a medium-density contextual residential district that generally allows residential (Use Group 1 and 2) and community facility (Use Group 3 and 4) uses. No commercial or industrial/manufacturing uses are permitted. R5D districts have a maximum FAR of 2.0 for residential uses. The maximum height permitted is 40 feet, or 45 feet with a qualifying ground floor. The minimum lot width for single- and two-family detached houses is 25 feet. Side yards are not required for lots less than 30 feet wide. The front yard must be at least five feet deep and at least as deep as one adjacent front yard but no deeper than the other, although it need not exceed a depth of 20 feet. Off-street parking is required for 66 percent of all dwelling units and no parking is required for income-restricted units within the Transit Zone.

[1] Based on American Community Survey 2016-2020 5-Year Estimates for PUMA 4101, which is an approximation of Bronx Community District 12, available at: https://communityprofiles.planning.nyc.gov/bronx/12.

R7A

R7A is a medium-density contextual residential district that typically produces high lot coverage, seven- to nine-story apartment buildings that blend with existing buildings in many established neighborhoods. R7A districts generally allow residential (Use Group 1 and 2) uses and community facility (Use Group 3 and 4) uses. No industrial/ manufacturing uses are permitted within R7A districts. Developments in R7A districts must be constructed pursuant to Quality Housing regulations, which allow a maximum residential FAR of 4.0, a maximum base height before setback of 65 feet, and a maximum permitted building height of 80 feet. Accessory parking is required for 50 percent of dwelling units and no parking is required for income-restricted units within the Transit Zone.

Commercial Overlays

C1 commercial overlays are typically mapped within residential districts with high off-street parking requirements. These overlays are mapped along streets that serve local retail needs and are found widely throughout the City's lower- and medium-density areas and occasionally in higher-density districts. C1 districts generally only permit Use Group 6 retail and service establishments. When commercial overlays are mapped in R1 through R5 districts, the maximum commercial FAR is 1.0; when mapped in R6 through R10 districts, the maximum commercial FAR is 2.0. C1-2 districts generally require one accessory parking space for every 300 square feet of floor area. C1-3 districts generally require one accessory parking space for every 400 square feet of floor area.

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED REZONING AREA

The Rezoning Area is located in the Astoria neighborhood of Queens Community District 1. The Rezoning Area is comprised of all or portions of 11 tax lots, including Block 876, Lots 12, 14, and 7501 (condo lots 1001-1003) and Block 874, Lots 68, 69, p/o 70, p/o 167, 168, 169, 268, and 269. The Rezoning Area is an irregularly shaped area of approximately 48,082 square feet with frontage along 21st Street, a 100-foot-wide two-way street, 23rd Terrace, a 50-foot-wide one-way street, and 24th Avenue, an 80-foot-wide two-way street. The portion of the Rezoning Area located on Block 876 is zoned R5D/C1-3 within 105 feet of 24th Avenue and R5B beyond a depth of 105 feet from 24th Avenue. The portion of the Rezoning Area located on Block 874 is zoned R5B. R5D and R5B are medium-density residential districts with maximum permitted FARs of 2.0 and 1.35, respectively. As set forth below, the Rezoning Area is generally characterized by a mix of residential uses.

23-81 21st Street (Block 876, Lot 7501(condo lots 1001-1003)) is an approximately 7,767 square foot corner lot that is improved with a new three-story mixed-use multi-family residential and commercial building with 13 units. Lot 7501 (condo lots 1001-1003) has approximately 78 feet of frontage along 21st Street and 100 feet of frontage along 23rd Terrace.

21-12 24th Avenue (Block 874, Lot 269) is an approximately 1,588 square foot interior lot that is improved with a single-family townhouse. Lot 269 has approximately 17 feet of frontage along 24th Avenue.

21-10 24th Avenue (Block 874, Lot 169) is an approximately 1,572 square foot interior lot that is improved with a single-family townhouse. Lot 169 has approximately 17 feet of frontage along 24th Avenue.

21-08 24th Avenue (Block 874, Lot 69) is an approximately 1,596 square foot interior lot that is improved with a single-family townhouse. Lot 69 has approximately 17 feet of frontage along 24th Avenue.

21-06 24th Avenue (Block 874, Lot 268) is an approximately 1,564 square foot interior lot that is improved with a single-family townhouse. Lot 268 has approximately 17 feet of frontage along 24th Avenue.

21-04 24th Avenue (Block 874, Lot 168) is an approximately 1,572 square foot interior lot that is improved with a single-family townhouse. Lot 168 has approximately 17 feet of frontage along 24th Avenue.

21-02 24th Avenue (Block 874, Lot 68) is an approximately 1,596 square foot corner lot that is improved with a single-family townhouse. Lot 68 has approximately 17 feet of frontage along 24th Avenue and approximately 94 feet of frontage along 21st Street.

24-11 21st Street (Block 874, Lot 167) is an approximately 2,156 square foot interior lot that is improved with a single-family townhouse. Lot 167 has approximately 22 feet of frontage along 21st Street.

5. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT SITES

The Applicant-owned Development Sites include Development Site 1, located at 21-01 24th Avenue (Block 876, Lots 12 and 14), and Development Site 2, located at 21-16 24th Avenue (Block 874, Lot 70). Development Site 1 has an area of approximately 15,565 square feet. Development Site 1 has approximately 125 feet of frontage on 24th Avenue and 130 feet of frontage on 21st Street. Vehicular access to the site is provided by a curb cut with a width of approximately 12 feet on 21st Street. The site has been improved with two one-story commercial buildings with a total floor area of approximately 19,788 gross square feet (1.27 FAR) since the 1930s. The buildings are currently vacant but were previously occupied by Riccardo's by the Bridge, a banquet hall and wedding venue.

Development Site 2 is an approximately 13,106 square foot interior lot that is unimproved and was previously used for accessory parking by Riccardo's by the Bridge. The site has approximately 115 feet of frontage along 24th Avenue. Vehicular access to the site's 39 parking spaces is provided by a curb cut with a width of approximately 12 feet on 24th Avenue.

6. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

In total, Proposed Developments 1 and 2 would introduce approximately 99,143 square feet of floor area (3.45 FAR), including approximately 84,287 square feet of residential floor area (92 dwelling units), 14,856 square feet of retail floor area on the ground-floor, and 41 accessory parking spaces. The proposed developments would contain a total of approximately 23 to 28 permanently affordable housing units pursuant to the MIH program.

Proposed Development 1 is a mixed-use building with approximately 55,802 square feet of floor area (3.59 FAR), including approximately 54 DUs (48,943 square feet), 6,859 square feet of commercial (retail) floor area, and 23 unenclosed accessory parking spaces. The proposed development will include a total of approximately 13 to 16 permanently affordable housing units pursuant to MIH. The proposed development would be set at the street line and rise to a height of 65 feet (six stories). At a height of 65 feet, the building would set back 10 feet before rising to a final building height of 85 feet (eight stories). The entrance to the residential lobby would be located on 21st Street and retail entrances would be located on both 21st Street and 24th Avenue. The proposed parking would be accessed by a new 12-foot curb cut on 24th Avenue. In addition to parking, other amenities for building tenants would include a laundry room, storage room, bicycle parking, and rooftop open space.

Proposed Development 2 is a mixed-use building with approximately 43,341 square feet of floor area (3.29 FAR), including approximately 38 DUs (35,344 square feet), 7,997 square feet of commercial (retail) floor area, and 18 accessory parking spaces. The proposed development will include a total of approximately 10 to 12 permanently affordable housing units pursuant to MIH. The proposed development would be set at the street line and rise to a height of 65 feet (six stories). At a height of 65 feet, the building would set back seven feet before rising to a final building height of 75 feet (seven stories). Building entrances to the proposed residential and retail uses would be located on 24th Avenue. The proposed parking would be located on the cellar level and would be accessed by a new 12-foot curb cut on 24th Avenue. In addition to parking, other amenities for building tenants would include a laundry room, storage room, bicycle parking, and rooftop open space.

7. ACTIONS NECESSARY TO FACILITATE THE PROJECT

The Applicant is requesting approval of a zoning map amendment and zoning text amendment to facilitate the proposed developments. Each of the requested actions is described below in more detail.

1. Zoning Map Amendment

The proposed zoning map amendment to section map 9a would change the zoning designation of 10 tax lots (Block 876, Lots 14, 7501 (condo lots 1001-1003); Block 874, Lots 68, 69, p/o 70, p/o 167, 168, 169, 268, and 269) from R5B to R6A/C1-4 and one tax lot (Block 876, Lot 12) from R5D/C1-3 to R6A/C1-4. The proposed C1-4 commercial overlay would be mapped within 100 feet of 21st Street and within 100 feet of 24th Avenue on Block 874. The proposed R6A/C1-4 zoning district is appropriate as the Development Sites are located in an area that is well served by public transportation and well equipped to handle the proposed increase in density. The Development Sites are well serviced by the Q69 and Q100 bus routes along 21st Street and the Q19 and M60 Select Bus Service routes along Hoyt Avenue. The Astoria Boulevard (N, W) subway station is located eight blocks (0.49 miles) to the east. Additionally, the Development Sites are located adjacent to the intersection of 21st Street and 24th Avenue, two wide streets, which can accommodate additional density. As a critical north-south transportation corridor in western Queens, 21st Street is an opportune location for new development. Furthermore, the Development Sites are located one block east of Astoria Park, an approximately 60 acre regional park that features a variety of amenities.

The proposed zoning map amendment would ensure that the permitted density and uses are consistent with the existing context of the surrounding area. The Project Area is located across 21st Street from an R7A zoning district and the proposed R6A zoning district would further establish this area as a medium density corridor. Additionally, the proposed C1-4 commercial overlay would provide opportunities for new mixed-use development, allow new retail uses that are currently permitted along other portions of 24th Avenue, and further expand the existing commercial corridor between Astoria Park and the Astoria Boulevard (N, W) subway station on 31st Street.

The proposed zoning map amendment would also facilitate the redevelopment of vacant properties with much needed new housing and permanently affordable housing, furthering City initiatives to create new housing and enlivening underutilized sites in close proximity to public transportation.

2. Zoning Text Amendment to Appendix F

The Applicant is requesting a zoning text amendment to Appendix F to designate the Rezoning Area as an MIH Area. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, approximately 37.6 percent of area households in Queens Community District 1 are rent burdened and there is a strong need for affordable housing that reaches a broad range of incomes.[2]

The MIH program requires that permanently affordable housing be provided within new residential developments, enlargements, and conversions from non-residential to residential use within the mapped MIH Areas. Within the MIH Area, all housing developments, enlargements and conversions that meet the criteria set forth in the MIH program must comply with the requirements of either Option 1 or Option 2 described below.

- Option 1: 25 percent of the residential floor area shall be provided as housing affordable to households at an average of 60 percent of the Income Index (AMI), with no unit targeted at a level exceeding 130 percent of AMI.
- Option 2: 30 percent of the residential floor area shall be provided as housing affordable to households at an average of 80 percent of the Income Index (AMI), with no unit targeted at a level exceeding 130 percent of AMI.

[2] Based on American Community Survey 2014-2016 5-Year Estimates for PUMA 4101, which is an approximation of Bronx Community District 12, available at: https://communityprofiles.planning.nyc.gov/bronx/12.

In addition to one or both of the options above, the City Council and the City Planning Commission could decide to apply one or both of the following options:

- Deep Affordability Option: 20 percent of the total residential floor area must be for housing units for residents with incomes averaging 40 percent of AMI and no direct subsidies could be used for these units except where needed to support more affordable housing.
- Workforce Option: 30 percent of the total residential floor area must be for housing units for residents with incomes averaging 115 percent of AMI; no units could go to residents with incomes above 135 percent AMI; no direct subsidies could be used for these affordable housing units; and this could not apply to Manhattan Community Districts 1-8.

The Applicant proposes to map the Rezoning Area with both MIH Options 1 and 2. As such, either 25 or 30 percent of residential floor area (approximately 23 to 28 units) would be provided at an average of 60 or 80 percent of AMI with no unit at a level exceeding 130 percent of AMI. The MIH requirement ensures that these 23 to 28 dwelling units, and a percentage of floor area in any future development within the MIH Area, are permanently affordable.

8. CONCLUSION

The Applicant is requesting approval of a zoning map amendment and zoning text amendment to facilitate the redevelopment of two vacant sites with new mixed-use residential and retail. The requested actions would facilitate the construction of much needed housing, including approximately 23 to 28 units of permanently affordable housing, furthering City initiatives to create new housing and enlivening underutilized sites in close proximity to public transportation. The proposal would also provide new opportunities for mixed-use development, allow new retail uses that are currently permitted in the surrounding area, and further expand an existing commercial corridor.