St. Francis Prep Commercial Overlay
61-00 Francis Lewis Boulevard
Block 7128, Lot 2, Queens
March 27, 2025

1. Introduction

The St. Francis Preparatory School (the "Applicant") seeks a zoning map amendment affecting Block 7128, Lot 2 (the "Project Area"), comprising 163,920 square feet ("sf") of lot area bounded by the Horace Harding (Long Island) Expressway southeasterly service road and Francis Lewis Boulevard in the Fresh Meadows neighborhood of Queens, Community District 8.

The Project Area is improved with an approximately 319,231 sf community facility building occupied by St. Francis Preparatory School ("St. Francis") since 1974. The proposed action seeks to map a C1-2 overlay within a R4 district on this historically non-residential site, consistent with C1-2 overlays mapped to the north of the Project Area. The proposed action will establish a continuity of land uses within the surrounding area and facilitate the legalization of an existing illuminated non-flashing double-sided accessory sign (the "Proposed Signage") at the Project Area.

2. Background

In 2013, the Applicant obtained approval of a zoning map amendment that replaced an R3-2 district with the current R4 zoning district within an area that included the Project Area (C 130170 ZMQ), to facilitate an enlargement of the school to its current size. An E-designation (E-301) requiring window wall attenuation and alternate ventilation was also mapped on the Project Area in connection with the 2013 rezoning.

3. Description of the Surrounding Area

The area within a 600-foot radius of the Project Area (the "Surrounding Area") comprises major roadways, unmapped parkland, and areas mapped within low-density districts (R4, R3-2, R3-2/C1-2, R2A and R2A/C1-2). The land uses and built context within the Surrounding Area are generally low density residential.

Located to the north of the Surrounding Area are the 160 feet wide Horace Harding Expressway and service roads. North of the Expressway are one- and three-story commercial uses within C1-2 overlays, including a supermarket, medical offices, and restaurant, surrounded by detached single-family homes in R3-2 and R2A districts. To the southwest of the Surrounding Area, in an R4 district, are a public school (P.S. Q004) and the Fresh Meadows housing development. The Fresh Meadows housing development is a large garden apartment complex designated as a Special Planned Community Preservation District (the "PC"), which protects the unique character of communities that have been planned and developed as a unit. No demolition, development, enlargement or alteration of landscaping or topography is permitted within the PC except by special permit of the City Planning Commission. In the eastern portion of the Surrounding area is Francis Lewis Boulevard, a 100 feet wide north-south roadway and the

western edge of the 358-acre Cunningham Park. The 2.7-acre Holy Cow Playground is located in the south of the Surrounding Area.

The Surrounding Area is located beyond the Greater Transit Zone; however, the Surrounding Area is accessible by car along major roadways, and the Q30, Q26 and Q76 bus lines provide service along the Long Island Expressway, Hollis Court Boulevard, and Francis Lewis Boulevard, respectively. Q76 and Q30 bus stops are located at the intersection of Francis Lewis Boulevard and Horace Harding Expressway.

4. Description of the proposed Project Area

The Project Area, located at Block 7128, Lot 2, comprises 163,920 sf of lot area bounded by the Horace Harding Expressway southeasterly service road and Francis Lewis Boulevard in the Fresh Meadows neighborhood of Queens, Community District 8. No other properties are affected by the proposed actions. The Project Area is a triangular lot with 769.85 feet of frontage on the Horace Harding Expressway service road and 565.78 feet of frontage on Francis Lewis Boulevard. Horace Harding Expressway measures 160 feet wide and Francis Lewis Boulevard measures 100 feet wide.

The Project Area is mapped within an R4 district. Residential and community facility uses, including schools, are allowed as-of-right in R4 districts.

In R4 districts, the maximum residential floor area ratio ("FAR") is 1.5. Single- and two-family detached, semi-detached, or zero lot line residential buildings in R4 districts are subject to setback regulations at perimeter wall base heights above 25 feet. Above this height, sloping planes meeting at a ridge line at 35 feet control the maximum height of the building, requiring a setback or pitched roof. All other residential buildings in R4 districts have a maximum building height of 35 feet. In R4 districts, residential front yards must be at least 10 feet deep. Detached residences must have two side yards at least 5 feet wide, semi-detached and zero lot lines residences must have a side yard at least 5 feet wide, and for all other residences no side yards are required; however if any open area extending along a side lot line is provided, it must have a minimum width of 5 feet. In R4 districts, residential buildings must provide a rear yard with a depth of not less than 20 feet. Beyond the Greater Transit Zone, on-site accessory parking spaces must be provided for 50 percent of standard dwelling units; however, a requirement for 3 residential parking spaces or less may be waived.

In R4 districts, community facility FAR is 2.00. In R4 districts, community facility buildings are not permitted to penetrate a sky exposure plane of 1 to 1 above a height of 35 feet. In R4 districts, community facility front yards must be 15 feet deep. Community facility buildings with street walls having an aggregate width of 80 feet or less must provide two side yards, each with a minimum required width of 8 feet, and community facility buildings with street walls having an aggregate width of more than 80 feet must provide two side yards equal to not less than 10 percent of the aggregate width of the street walls. In R4 districts, community facility buildings must have a rear yard of not less than 30 feet. In R4 districts, the parking requirement for community facility uses is generally based on the amount of floor area.

The Project Area is currently improved with a four-story school building. According to Department of Buildings records, the school building was constructed in the early 1960s and a certificate of occupancy was issued in 1963. St. Francis began operating at the site in 1974, replacing the Bishop Reilly High School. St. Francis is the largest private Catholic secondary school in the United States, with an enrollment of approximately 2,750 students from all areas of the City. The building contains 329,726 sf of community facility floor area (2.00 FAR). Approximately 167 accessory parking spaces in an open parking lot are accessed from two curb cuts on the Horace Harding Expressway service road measuring 50'-5" and 57'-5" wide, respectively, and one curb cut on Francis Lewis Boulevard measuring 76'-4" wide.

5. Description of the Proposed Development

No construction of a building or other structure is proposed in connection with the proposed action. The Applicant proposes to legalize an existing illuminated non-flashing double-sided accessory sign, which is not allowed in the current R4 zoning district. The Proposed Signage, which is located within the property line (and does not project across a street line), has a surface area of 47 sf and a height of 10'-2½". The Proposed Signage is situated along the Francis Lewis Boulevard within a corner lot portion of the Project Area. The Proposed Signage is a necessary tool that allows St. Francis to communicate information to students, parents and the community.

6. Actions necessary to facilitate the Proposed Development

The Applicant seeks approval of a zoning map amendment to map a C1-2 overlay on the Project Area within an existing R4 district. The proposed action will establish harmonious land use patterns by extending the existing C1-2 overlay mapped within non-residential areas on the north side of the Horace Harding Expressway, opposite the Project Area. The proposed C1-2 overlay will cover an area that has been occupied by non-residential uses for over 60 years, and within which community facility, retail and personal service uses serving frequently recurring local needs within residential communities will be allowed.

Community facilities in C1-2 districts mapped within an R4 district are subject to a maximum FAR of 2.0 (0.75 FAR for philanthropic or non-profit institutions with sleeping accommodations). Commercial uses in C1-2 districts mapped within an R4 district are subject to a maximum FAR of 2.0. For commercial or community facility buildings in C1-2 districts, no side yards are required, but if an open area along a side lot line is provided at any level, it must be at least 8 feet wide. In C1-2 districts, for commercial or community facility buildings, a rear yard with a depth of not less than 20 feet must be provided. In C1-2 districts mapped within R4 districts, commercial or community facility buildings are not permitted to penetrate a sky exposure plane of 1 to 1 at a height above 30 feet.

Typical uses in C1-2 districts include neighborhood grocery stores, restaurants and beauty parlors. The proposed C1-2 overlay will allow illuminated accessory signage, consistent with overlays mapped to the north and northeast of the Project Area. While the R4 zoning district permits community facilities, it only allows illuminated accessory signs for hospitals and related facilities. In C1-2 districts, illuminated non-flashing accessory signs are permitted, subject to restrictions on size, location and height.

Residential bulk within the Project Area will be governed by the R4 district in which it is mapped, except that certain bulk regulations applicable to residential buildings are modified, including the elimination of a residential front and side yard requirements; however, if an open area extending along a side lot line is provided, it must have a minimum width of 5 feet. Regulations applicable in C1 districts mapped along an entire street frontage within R4 districts also modify residential setback requirements to require the applicable residential setback between a height of 20 feet and 35 feet.

7. Conclusion

The Applicant, St. Francis Preparatory School, seeks a zoning map amendment to extend a C1-2 overlay within an existing R4 district over Block 7128, Lot 2, comprising 163,920 sf of lot area at the intersection of the Horace Harding Expressway southeasterly service road and Francis Lewis Boulevard in the Fresh Meadows neighborhood of Queens, Community District 8. The proposed action will allow land uses on the Project Area, which has been occupied for non-residential uses for over 60 years, that are consistent with commercial overlays mapped immediately north of the Horace Harding Expressway.