Project Description (LR Item 3)
Project ID: 2023Q0289

102-51 Queens Boulevard

May 2024

1. Introduction

QBM Properties LLC (the "Applicant") seeks a series of actions to facilitate a new mixed-use development in the Forest Hills section of Queens Community District #6. The Applicant seeks a zoning map amendment affecting the western portion of Queens Block 2137; Lots 1, 6, 8, 11 and portions of ("p/o") Lots 13 and 46 (the "Rezoning Area") from R7-1/C1-2 to R8X/C2-4 and R7-1, with the commercial overlay reduced to 100 feet in depth measured from Queens Boulevard.

In addition, a zoning text amendment to *Appendix F* of the Zoning Resolution ("ZR") is required that would make the Rezoning Area applicable as a Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) area with Options 1 and 2 mapped (the "Proposed Actions").

The proposed zoning map amendment would facilitate the redevelopment of the Development Site (Block 2137 Lots 1, 6, 8, and 11), which is underutilized as multiple one-story commercial buildings, with a 17-story mixed-use building to contain a total of 184,042 square feet (7.2 FAR) including approximately 216 dwelling units (54 affordable) and would include 17,862 square feet of commercial area on the ground floor (the "Proposed Development"). Approximately 87 parking spaces would be provided where 73 are required.

2. Background

The underlying R7-1/C1-2 district has existed since the creation of the 1961 ZR and has not been modified since that time period. The area several blocks to the north of the Rezoning Area was amended in 1992 as part of the Forest Hills/Rego Park Rezoning (910483 ZMQ), which affected portions of twenty-one blocks in an area generally bounded by 62nd Drive to the north, 108th Street to the east, 66th Avenue to the south and 99th Street to the west. The rezoning amended districts from R7-1, R4 and C1-2 to R4B, R5, R6A, R7-1 and C1-3.

A second Forest Hills/Rego Park rezoning was completed 2002 (020629 ZMQ) for the area to the south of Queens Boulevard. This second rezoning amended R7-1 districts to R4B; R4 districts to R4 and R3A; R3-2 districts to R3-1 and R2. The rezoning was initiated because at the time, zoning designations within the Forest Hills/Rego Park area had been in place since the 1961 ZR and

residents were concerned that current zoning allows new residential development that was of scale with the existing character of the area.

Further south and east, Forest Hills area was rezoned in 2009 as part of the creation of the Special Forest Hills District (C 090104 ZMQ), which affected the area to the south of Queens Boulevard. This project, initiated by DCP and Queens Community Board 6, aimed to update the initial zoning districts from 1961 which were zoned C8-2, C4-2 and R7-1 and resulted in predominantly open-envelope buildings under Height Factor regulations. The rezoning created new R5D/C2-3, C4-4A and C4-5X contextual districts. These new districts were mapped to reinforce the existing built context by providing predictable building envelopes, a broad and vibrant mix of uses and a transition in scale and density from north to south. However, the Rezoning Area and northern side of Queens Boulevard were unaffected by the above map amendments and the underlying R7-1 district from 1961 remains.

In addition to the Special Forest Hills District and rezoning, the area to the north/east was also rezoned in 2009 as part of the Cord Meyer-Forest Hills Rezoning (C 090283 ZMQ). This rezoning also aimed to create contextual districts but at a lower density (R1-2A), reflecting the predominately low-rise character of areas to the north of Queens Boulevard. The Premises and north side of Queens Boulevard were also unaffected by this project, as Queens Boulevard contains buildings at much higher densities than the predominantly low-rise residential area to the north.

Most recently in April of 2022, to the northwest of the Rezoning Area along Queens Boulevard at 66th Road, an area was rezoned from R7-1/C1-2 to R8X/C2-4 as part of the 98-81 Queens Boulevard Rezoning (210161 ZMQ). The rezoning was intended to facilitate a 15-story mixed-use building that would rise to 174 feet with 153,400 square feet of floor area (7.16 FAR) and 154 dwelling units. The building would provide 45 parking spaces and approximately 25% of the 154 dwelling units were proposed as affordable unit MIH Option 1.

3. Description of the Surrounding Area

The Rezoning Area is located along Queens Boulevard near 68th Road. Queens Boulevard is a principal arterial thoroughfare that travels east-west through the Borough of Queens and correspondingly contains a mix of uses and densities. Queens Boulevard itself is lined with apartment buildings rising between 6- and 13-stories and some older two-story commercial buildings. Within 10 blocks are buildings that rise over 20-stories. The Parker Towers are located immediately to the south at 104-20 Queens Boulevard, which rise to 20-stories. In addition, there is a 23-story mixed-use complex located at 98-04 Queens Boulevard (Block 3086, Lot 7) and a 31-story building at 102-10 66th Road (Block 2133, Lot 16). Interspersed with older apartment buildings are segments of attached one- and two-family homes that rise to two-stories, as explained in greater detail below.

The surrounding area contains a mix of community facility uses. Notable uses include Long Island Jewish Hospital at Forest Hills at 102-91 66th Road, Junior High School 190 Russell Sage at 68-17 Austin Street, the Academy for Excellence through the Arts at 68-60 110th Street, the Forest Hills branch of the Queens Public Library at 108-19 71st Avenue, and the Sephardic Jewish Congregation at 101-17 67th Drive. It should be noted many of the older pre-1961 residential buildings in the surrounding area have ground-floor spaces with smaller community facility spaces often allocated for medical uses.

Parks and other open spaces located near the Rezoning Area include Federoff Triangle, located at 100-25 Queens Blvd, Horace Harding Playground, located along 62nd Drive between 97th Place and 98th Street, Yellowstone Park, located at 106-21 68th Avenue, MacDonald Park, located at 87-20 Queens Boulevard, Plaza 67, located at 67-04 Austin Street, Annandale Playground, located at Yellowstone Boulevard between 64th Road and 65th Avenue, and Russell Sage Playground, located at 68-98 Booth Street.

The Rezoning Area and surrounding area are in a large R7-1 district that dates from the 1961 ZR (as noted above). Queens Boulevard is also lined with C1-2 commercial overlays from 66th Road to 69th Avenue. Also, in the 600-foot radius is a portion of an R4B zoning district, which coincide with the clusters of attached one and two-family homes located to the south of Queens Boulevard along 67th Drive and to the west of 67th Avenue.

R7-1 district is a general residential district that permits both Quality Housing and Height Factor regulations. The Height Factor regulations for R7 districts encourage small apartment buildings on small zoning lots, and tall, narrow buildings that are set back from the street on larger lots. Quality Housing regulations encourage buildings with higher lot coverage set at or near the street line. Under Height Factor regulations, the R7-1 district allows a maximum FAR from 0.87 to 3.44 for residential use and the required open space ratio (OSR) ranges from 15.5 to 25.5 percent. Height limitations ensure that these buildings are often more compatible with older buildings in the neighborhood. As an incentive to pursue the Quality Housing option, a higher floor area ratio of 4.0 FAR is permitted on wide streets outside Manhattan. For Height Factor buildings, the height is controlled by the sky exposure plane, which begins at 60 feet. Under Quality Housing regulations, a base height of 40-75 feet is permitted, with a maximum height between 75-85 feet depending on the location on a wide or narrow street. For Height Factor buildings, 60 percent of dwelling units require parking, while for Quality Housing buildings, 50 percent of dwelling units require parking.

In R7-1 districts, the C1-2 district permits a commercial FAR of 2.0 to be located on the first floor of buildings. The C1 district permits limited neighborhood retail (Use Group 6). For most retail

uses in C1-2 districts, one parking space per 300 square feet is required, which reflects a relative dependence on automotive use with a mix of transit availability.

R4B is a contextual zoning district that permits single- and two-family attached rowhouses, as well as semi-detached buildings. The maximum FAR is 0.9 with a maximum building height of 24 feet. This district predominantly creates two-story flat-roofed houses with 5-foot deep front yards. Parking must be contained in the rear of the building and one space is required per dwelling unit, unless only one space is required.

The area is well served by public transit. The New York City Transit (NYCT) R/M train lines make stops along Queens Boulevard at 67th Avenue, three blocks to the west. In addition, the E, F, M and R trains make stops at Queens Boulevard at 71st Avenue, 5 blocks to the east. In terms of bus service, the Q60 make stops along Queens Boulevard at 68th Drive and the QM12/QM42 express bus service makes stops along Yellowstone Boulevard at 68th Road. Accordingly, the Rezoning Area is located in the Transit Zone.

4. Description of the Proposed Project Area

The Proposed Project Area comprises the Development Site (described below) and portions of Block 2137, Lot 13 and 46. Only small portions of these lots are included in the Rezoning Area, with approximately 1,220 sf of Lot 13 (5 percent) and approximately 4,060 sf of Lot 46 (20 percent) mapped within the C1-2 commercial overlay along Queens Boulevard, which is proposed to be reduced to 100 feet in width and those parcels affectively removed from the overlay and rezoned from R7-1/C1-2 to R7-1. As such, these lots are not expected to materially change as a result of the Proposed Actions.

Lot 13 (103-26 68th Avenue) includes 24,000 sf of lot area and contains a six-story, approximately 72,223 sf elevator apartment building (3.0) with 86 dwelling units. Approximately 1,220 square feet of this lot is zoned R7-1/C1-2 (5 percent), which would be rezoned to R7-1.

Lot 46 (103-19 68th Road). Lot 46 is a 20,000 square foot lot that fronts 68th Road. It is improved with a 6-story apartment building (constructed in 1954) that contains approximately 71,000 square feet (3.55 FAR). The building includes approximately 81 dwelling units. Approximately 4,060 square feet of this lot is zoned R7-1/C1-2 (20 percent), which would be rezoned to R7-1.

5. Description of the Proposed Development Site

The Development Site is made up of an assemblage of Block 2137 Lots 1, 6, 8 and 11 that fronts Queens Boulevard and stretches from 68th Road to 68th Avenue. Queens Boulevard is classified

as a 'wide' street with over 200 feet in width, while 68th Road and 68th Avenue are 'narrow' side streets with 60 feet in width. The Premises has approximately 25,590 square feet of lot area with 208 feet along Queens Boulevard, 101 feet along 68th Road and 158 Feet along 68th Avenue.

The properties are currently improved with four separate, one-story commercial uses, constructed in the 1940s.

Lot 1 (102-43 Queens Boulevard) is an approximate 11,400 square-foot corner lot with an approximate 19,100 square-foot commercial building. The building was constructed in 1942 and is currently occupied with a restaurant and catering business.

Lot 6 (102-37 Queens Boulevard) is an interior lot with approximately 3,700 square feet in lot area square feet. The property is improved with an approximate 3,600 square-foot commercial building that is occupied with two restaurants.

Lot 8 (102-29 Queens Boulevard) is an approximate 6,500 square-foot corner lot that is improved with a single-story 5,700 square foot commercial building. It currently contains a bank and urgent care facility.

Lot 11 (No mapped address) fronts on 68th Avenue contains a 4,000 square foot lot used as off-street parking. The parcel contains a single curb cut approximately 12 feet in width.

6. Description of the Proposed Development

The Proposed Actions would facilitate a new 17-story, mixed use (residential-commercial) building with 216 dwelling units in approximately 184,042 square feet (7.2 FAR). The building would contain 216 dwelling units, with 54 income-restricted dwelling units pursuant to MIH under Option 1 or 25 percent of the proposed residential floor area. The ground floor would contain approximately 17,876 square feet (0.69 FAR) of new retail commercial space along all three frontage. The residential lobby would be located along Queens Boulevard.

The proposed building would rise to 165 feet after a 10-foot setback at the 9th floor, for a maximum street wall height of 95 feet. 87 accessory parking spaces would be provided, where 73 are required, on the 2nd floor and basement, made accessible via two curb cuts. The first curb cut would be located along 68th Avenue and contain approximately 20 feet in width (with splays), which would lead to the second floor, where 60 spaces would be provided. The second curb cut would be located along 68th Road, which would lead to the cellar where 27 parking spaces would be provided. The second curb cut along 68th Road would be 12 feet wide. The proposed 216 dwelling units are preliminary proposed as a mix of 85 studios, 85 one-bedroom apartments, 23 two-bedrooms and 23 three-bedrooms.

7. Actions Necessary to Facilitate the Project

The Proposed Actions consist of a zoning map amendment that would rezone Block 2137 Lots 1, 6, 8, 11, 13 (p/o) and Lot 46 (p/o) from R7-1/C1-2 to R8X/C2-4. This rezoning would reduce the depth of the commercial overlay in the Rezoning area to 100 feet, effectively removing the overlay from Lots 13 and 46, which are improved with pre-existing apartment buildings (and no commercial use). Accordingly, the new district would be mapped from a line perpendicular to 68th Road, 100 feet from the intersection of Queens Boulevard and 68th Road.

In connection with the proposed zoning map amendment, the proposed Rezoning Area would also be made applicable to MIH through a text amendment to Appendix F of the ZR under Options 1 and 2 (the "Proposed Actions").

The R8X residential district allows for buildings up to 7.2 FAR (with MIH). Maximum lot coverage is 70 percent for interior and through lots and 100 percent on corner lots. Above a base height of 105 feet, the building must set back before rising to a maximum of 175 feet (with a Qualifying Ground Floor) or 17-stories (with MIH). Parking is required for 40 percent of all dwelling units and is not required for income-restricted dwelling units at 80 percent AMI and below in the Transit Zone. The proposed C2-4 district permits a maximum of 2.0 FAR of commercial use with neighborhood retail and general service uses permitted (Use Groups 5-9 & 14). Parking varies by use for commercial uses, with most uses requiring one space per 1,000 square feet, and the requirement is waived where under 40 spaces and under are required[1].

The proposed zoning text amendment, pursuant to *Appendix F* of the Zoning Resolution, would make the Rezoning Area a Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) area and would be mapped as Options 1 and 2. All residential developments, enlargements, and conversions within this MIH area must comply with the program by providing 25 percent of residential floor area as income-restricted dwelling units for residents with incomes averaging 60 percent AMI and below (Option 1) or 30 percent of residential floor area as income-restricted dwelling units for residents with incomes averaging 80 percent AMI and below (Option 2). 30 percent of residential floor area as income-restricted dwelling units for residents with incomes averaging 80 percent AMI and below (Option 2).

[1] *If the City of Yes for Housing Opportunity text amendment is adopted as currently proposed by the Department of City Planning, R8X districts would continue allow for up to 7.2 FAR and a maximum height of 175 feet. Parking would no longer be required but the applicant plans to voluntarily provide parking.*

At this time, the Proposed Development would comply with MIH under Option 1 by providing 54 permanently affordable dwelling units or 25 percent of the proposed 148,700 square feet of residential floor area. These units would be made permanently affordable to incomes averaging 60 percent AMI, with at least 10 percent of floor area at 40 percent AMI.

Currently, the Rezoning Area is underdeveloped with a series of one-story buildings lining Queens Boulevard, in an area otherwise developed with mid-rise apartment buildings. The Proposed Actions would result in productive use of the Rezoning Area at an appropriate density of 17-stories, with new dwelling units including required affordable units, a demonstrated need for all areas of the city.

The Proposed Actions are appropriate for this area, which would result in an increased but appropriate amount of density along Queens Boulevard. The Rezoning Area is situated along a heavily trafficked mixed-use thoroughfare (Queens Boulevard) and in close proximity to transit and is believed to be appropriate for additional permitted density beyond the underlying R7-1 zoning district, which has no height limit. In addition, the proposed maximum permitted height of 17-stories under the proposed R8X/C2-4 district would not be inconsistent with the surrounding area, where numerous buildings are consistent with or rise above that height, including 102-10 66th Road (30-stories), 104-20 Queens Boulevard (20-stories), 70-25 Yellowstone Boulevard (24-stories), and 62-54 97th Place (17-stories). In addition, the proposed new R8X/C2-4 district would be consistent with the recently enacted and same district at 98-81 Queens Boulevard. Furthermore, the map amendment would affect a single block and the Proposed Development would not affect access to light and air on an adjoining parcels or developments in the remaining R7-1 district.

As noted above, the proposed R8X district would require contextual developments under Quality Housing regulations, which would serve to improve the urban design of this intersection when compared to the underlying R7-1 district, which permits Height Factor buildings with no maximum height or mandatory street wall heights. The proposed C2-4 district would also be appropriate for this location, as the district is a commercial overlay intended for areas in close proximity to transit and thus requires less parking (one per 1,000 square feet and is waived where under 40 spaces are required) than the underlying C1-2 district, which requires greater parking for an area in close proximity to transit. The proposed C2-4 district would also increase the range of permitted uses from Use Groups 5-6 (local retail) to an expanded range of neighborhood retail (Use Groups 5-9 & 14). This would be consistent with the arterial commercial nature of Queens Boulevard and proximity to transit.

8. Conclusion

The Proposed Actions would result in an increased amount of density under contextual building requirements for an appropriate location along a heavily trafficked arterial thoroughfare (Queens Boulevard) in close proximity to transit. This increased density would facilitate a new 17-story building that would be consistent with the surrounding area, where numerous buildings rise between 13- and 30-stories and would require maximum height limits when compared to the existing R7-1 district, thus improving the urban design and pedestrian environment of this intersection.

Given the underdevelopment of the Rezoning Area with the underlying R7-1/C1-2 district, it is believed the Proposed Actions would put productive use of these properties by permitting increased housing capacity in an appropriate location, including approximately 54 income-restricted dwelling units, as well as commercial retail space with a reduced parking requirement, consistent with the transit rich environment of the immediate area.