

Queens Borough President Recommendation

APPLICATION: ULURP #200031 ZSQ

COMMUNITY BOARD: Q02

DOCKET DESCRIPTION

IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by Akerman LLP on behalf of Home Depot U.S.A., Inc., pursuant to Section 197-c and 201 of the New York City Charter, for the grant of a special permit pursuant to ZR Sections 42-121 and 74-932 to allow within a designated area in Subarea 2 as shown on Appendix J of the Zoning Resolution the development of a self-storage facility (Use Group 16D) in an M1-1 District, located at **59-02 Borden Avenue**, Block 2657, Lot 40, Zoning Map 13-c, Maspeth, Borough of Queens.

PUBLIC HEARING

A Public Hearing was held at Queens Borough Hall in the Borough President's Conference Room at 120-55 Queens Boulevard on Thursday, March 12, 2020 at 10:30 A.M. pursuant to Section 82(5) of the New York City Charter and was duly advertised in the manner specified in Section 197-c (i) of the New York City Charter. The applicant made a presentation. There were five (5) speakers in favor with five (5) speakers against. The hearing was closed.

CONSIDERATION

Subsequent to a review of the application and consideration of testimony received at the public hearing, the following issues and impacts have been identified:

- The applicant is requesting a Special Permit to allow a self-storage facility in an Industrial Business Zone. The proposed self-storage facility would be a six-story, approximately 135,000 SF built on an approximately 97' X 307' (29,779 SF) site fronting on Borden Avenue on the northern portion of the lot;
- The proposed self-storage facility would be part of an otherwise as-of-right development featuring a Home Depot store and two other commercial retail buildings. The Home Depot is proposed as a one-story, approximately 134,000 SF building on the western portion of the lot, adjoining the self-storage facility. The two 1-story commercial retail buildings, 8,220 and 12,400 SF respectively, will be located on the eastern portion of the lot, fronting on Maurice Avenue. There will be 520 parking spaces allocated at grade next to the self-storage facility and the Home Depot, as well as on the Home Depot rooftop. All traffic for the Development Site would enter and exit from Borden Avenue. The applicant states that small contractors without warehouses or storage yards would be able to purchase supplies and materials from Home Depot and then store those supplies and materials in the adjacent self-storage facility;
- The development site (Block 2657, Lot 40) is a 316,200-SF irregularly shaped lot in an M1-1 District. The current site is developed with a 202,050-SF vacant, one- and two-story manufacturing building, situated in the center of the lot. The existing building is a former Coca-Cola warehouse and bottling facility;
- The Queens Midtown/Long Island Expressway overpass (along Borden Avenue, which acts as a service road), Mt. Zion and Calvary Cemeteries are located north and northwest of the site. There are R-4 zoned residential properties approximately 800 feet to the east. The site is in the Maspeth Industrial Business Zone (IBZ), which is characterized by other manufacturing businesses such as prepared food, soft drinks, and the production of metal and steel goods. Two bus routes (Q39 and Q67) make stops along Maurice Ave and Borden Ave respectively;
- Created in 2006, IBZs offer manufacturing businesses tax credits as part of an effort to stabilize and reserve space for industrial economic development in specific districts. In 2017, the Self-Storage Text Amendment was adopted, creating the self-storage special permit regulating the use to preserve manufacturing space in the IBZs;
- The applicant states the proposed self-storage facility is part of a larger development on the site that would meet the findings necessary to grant the special permit in alignment with the economic purposes of the IBZ for the following reasons: real estate transactions in Maspeth demonstrate a lessened demand for traditional manufacturing uses; the opening of a Home Depot on the site will create 400 to 500 jobs in accordance with the IBZ's economic development objectives; the facility footprint would be less than a traditional manufacturing building; narrower side streets around the development site make it ill-suited for large truck traffic; the site is over a mile from the nearest subway station, which makes the location less desirable for manufacturing employees; and the applicant states there is no other self-storage facility within a quarter-mile of the surrounding area;

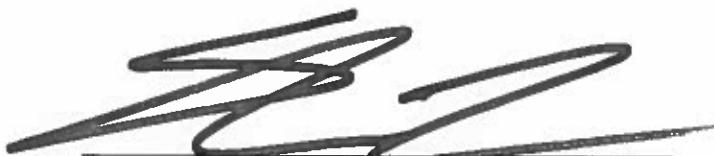
- o Community Board 2 (CB2) disapproved this application with modifications by a vote of twenty-five (25) against with none (0) in favor or abstaining at a public hearing held on February 6, 2020. CB2 states the Special Permit was created to preserve job-generating industrial businesses, and the proposed self-storage facility does not align with the economic development objectives of the Maspeth IBZ because it generates fewer industrial jobs. CB2 also recommended that the other two commercial retail buildings in the development support manufacturing uses consistent with the IBZ. Concerns raised at the CB2 public hearing included: the use of union labor to develop the site and that self-storage facilities in IBZs reduce available land for traditional manufacturing businesses;
- o The Borough President's Office has received numerous correspondence regarding this application both in favor and in opposition. The Maspeth Industrial Business Association wrote that Home Depot jobs may not pay better wages compared to traditional manufacturing jobs, and that contractors often share rent on large lots to store materials or store materials at the job site making rendering self-service storage unnecessary. An owner of a local quickly growing business with 25-30 fulltime employees forwarded a copy of his February 21, 2020 letter to Councilmember Robert Holden opposing the application, saying his business may need to relocate outside the city due to rising manufacturing real estate costs. He mentions the proposed self-storage location would be an "ideal location...to employ local people" and fulfill his minimum size requirement (30,000-50,000 SF). A letter dated February 11, 2020 from NYC Councilmember Robert Holden was received. The councilmember expressed support for the application, citing the benefit to local business contractors, and the "relatively small footprint on the property" posed by the six-story self-storage facility. A letter dated March 12, 2020 from NYS Senator and Majority Deputy Whip Joseph Adabbo, Jr. was received. The senator expressed support for the application, citing the benefit of "an excellent new amenity" to the Maspeth community, and the "need in the area for self-storage, both from local residents and small business owners".

RECOMMENDATION

The proposed self-storage facility is part of larger as-of-right commercial development in a light industrial district that would provide 400 to 500 jobs. The applicant has stated that the Home Depot store would be built with union labor. Additionally, the proposed self-storage facility would provide space for small contractors who do not have warehouse space or storage yards to stock supplies and materials for their jobs.

Based on the above consideration, I hereby recommend approval of this application with the following conditions:

- The two buildings other than the Home Depot in this development should be heavily marketed to industrial users who are looking for new space;
- There is a commitment to employ union labor – and the prevailing rate of wages and supplements – to all workers for the construction of the self-storage facility.



PRESIDENT, BOROUGH OF QUEENS

3/12/2020
DATE