



Community Board 12 - Manhattan Washington Heights & Inwood

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Shahabuddeen A. Ally, Esq., Chairperson
Ebenezer Smith, District Manager

April 29, 2016

Hon. Margery Perlmutter
Chair
Board of Standards & Appeals
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10007

Re: 465-469 W. 165th Street
458-464 W. 166th Street

Dear Commissioner Perlmutter

At our General Meeting on Tuesday, April 26, 2016 the Community Board 12 Manhattan, passed the following resolution with a vote of (35)In Favor, (0)Opposed, (0)Abstained, Community Board 12-Manhattan does not support a 10-year renewal of the BSA zoning variance to allow continued operation of the public parking lot located at 465-469 West 165th Street and 458-464 West 166th Street, but it does support a limited renewal of the zoning variance of approximately three years or through the end of Columbia University's current lease on the Property, which we understand to be no later than July 31, 2019; also

Whereas: On February 17, 2016 an application (the "Application") was filed with the Board of Standards and Appeals ("BSA") by Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson LLP (the "Applicant") on behalf of the Trustees of Columbia University to renew an existing zoning variance for a public parking lot located at 465-469 West 165th Street and 458-464 West 166th Street (Block 2111, Lots 53, 54, 55, 57, 71 72 and 73) (the "Property"). The Property is a 17,730 square foot through-lot located on a block bounded by Amsterdam Avenue and Edgecombe Avenue with frontage on West 165th Street and West 166th Street. The Property is located within a R7-2 residential zoning district and is currently used as a parking lot by affiliates of Columbia University Medical Center and the local neighborhood, including an adjacent daycare center and middle school. It does not belong to any adjacent residential building and therefore is defined as public parking area under the New York City Zoning Resolution. R7-2 zoning does not permit public parking as-of-right. To allow the Property to be used as public parking, a zoning variance (the "Variance") was initially granted by the BSA in February 2001 and renewed in February 2007. The renewal granted in 2007 expired on February 6, 2016 but remains in effect in light of the Application, which seeks a 10-year to renewal to the term of the Variance; and

Whereas: The Property is owned by Sand Realty and S&H Edgecombe Corp. (the "Owners") and leased by Columbia University. It contains 71 vehicular parking spaces and seven bicycle spaces and is attended 24 hours a day. Vehicles enter and exit through a curb cut on West 165th Street. No changes are proposed to the capacity, layout or operations of the parking lot; and

Whereas: A two-story community facility building (the "Corner Building" or "639 Edgecombe Avenue") located at the corner of West 166th Street and Edgecombe Avenue, adjacent to the Property, is leased by the RENA Day Care Center (the "Center") and is also owned by the same parties that own the Property, including members of the Seavey family and/or principals of the Seavey Organization. The Seavey Organization is an accomplished developer of affordable housing; and

Whereas: The Property was acquired in whole or in part by the City of New York through an In Rem Tax Foreclosure action in April 1977 and sold to the Owners in September 1992; and

Whereas: Land Use Committee member Steve Simon, who formerly served as Chief-of-Staff to City Councilman Stanley Michels, advised the Land Use Committee that he recalls that the owners of the Corner Building approached Councilman Michels and stated that obtaining ownership of the Property would enable them to build a playground for use by the Center, and that then-Borough President Ruth Messinger worked with Councilman Michels to ensure that the Property, at that time City-owned, was not put up for sale at an auction and was instead sold to the owners of the Corner Building, but the playground never materialized; and

Whereas: Representatives of the Applicant attended the April 6, 2016 meeting of the Land Use Committee ("Land Use" or the "Committee") to present the Application. The Land Use Committee was advised that Columbia University's new School of Nursing is being constructed on what was formerly one of its parking lots; that when completed it will have underground parking to replace the previous spaces on that site, and that continued operation of the Property as a parking lot by Columbia is only necessary until the construction of School of Nursing is completed, estimated by year-end 2017; and

Whereas: There are a limited number of vacant sites in Washington Heights and Inwood suitable for development. The Property is one such site, and it should be put to a more productive use than parking. Under current zoning, a new 70,900 square foot residential building containing approximately 83 units can be built as-of-right, and an approximately 115,000 square foot mixed-use building containing residential, community facility and parking uses can also be built as-of-right; and

Whereas: It is reasonable to renew the Variance for a term sufficient to accommodate the construction schedule for Columbia University's School of Nursing and the planning, design and financing of a project to redevelop the Property, but a 10-year renewal is not justified; now, therefore, be it

Resolved: Community Board 12-Manhattan does not support a 10-year renewal of the BSA zoning variance to allow continued operation of the public parking lot located at 465-469 West 165th Street and 458-464 West 166th Street, but it does support a limited renewal of the zoning variance of approximately three years or through the end of Columbia University's current lease on the Property, which we understand to be no later than July 31, 2019; and be it further

Resolved: Community Board 12-Manhattan urges the elected officials who represent Washington Heights to engage the owners of 465-469 West 165th Street and 458-464 West 166th Street and work with them and the community board to plan and undertake a project that redevelops the site with a building that predominantly includes affordable housing.

Sincerely,


Shahabuddeen A. Ally, Esq.
Chairperson

Cc:

Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
Hon. Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Lelitia James, Public Advocate
Hon. Charles Rangel, Congressman
Hon. Bill Perkins, State Senator

Hon. Herman D. Farrell, Jr., Assembly Member
Hon. Guillermo Linares, Assembly Member
Hon. Ydanis Rodríguez, Council Member
Hon. Mark Levine, Council Member
Hon. Adriano Espaillat, State Senator