



The City of New York

Queens Community Board 11

Serving the Communities of Auburndale, Bayside, Douglaston, Hollis Hills
Little Neck and Oakland Gardens

Michael Budabin Chairperson / **Joseph Marziliano** District Manager

TO: All Board Members
FROM: Douglas Montgomery, Douglaston Zoning Chair
DATE: January 12, 2023
RE: 242-22 61 Avenue

On Wednesday, January 11, 2023, the Douglaston Zoning Committee met via Zoom teleconference to hear a presentation regarding an application to the NYC Department of City Planning (DCP) for a height authorization needed for the proposed construction of a long-term care facility, medical offices and apartments at 242-22 61 Avenue in Douglaston.

Present

Douglas Montgomery, Committee Chair
Michael Budabin, Board Chair
Henry Euler, 3rd Vice Chair
Bernard Haber, Committee Member
Rosemarie Guidice, Committee Member
Jyothi Sriram, Committee Member
Susan Cerezo, Committee Member
Christina Scherer, Non-Committee Board Member
Stephan Popa, Non-Committee Board Member
Joan Garippa, Non-Committee Board Member

Guests

Eric Palatnik, applicant's representative
Alonso Espinoza, Urban Cartographics
David Slifkin, Marx Development Group (MDG)
Oz Cetin, project architect for Marx Development Group (MDG)

Other

Scott Solomon, Department of City Planning (DCP)
Sola Olosunde, Queens Borough President's Office (QPBO)
Sonya Hong, Council Member Paladino's office

CB11 Staff

Joseph Marziliano, District Manager
Jane Bentivenga, Community Coordinator

Mr. Montgomery introduced the applicant's representative, Eric Palatnik. The applicant requested this informational meeting prior to, and in anticipation of, the referral of this application by the DCP. The presentation was screen-shared, and Mr. Palatnik reviewed the final plans for the proposed buildings. He explained that this project has changed several times since 2019. He also stated that many of the changes were made based on previous comments by Community Board 11.

The building height that is being proposed is 80 feet higher than what is allowed. Mr. Palatnik said the design fits well within the hillside. Due to the height of the adjacent tree line, he said the height of the buildings will only be visible if someone is traveling southbound on the Cross Island Parkway or eastbound on the Long Island Expressway. Mr. Haber questioned the design of the retaining wall and asked how high it will be on the eastern end. He also asked if it will be a gravity wall. Oz Cetin, project architect for MDG, stated it will be a gravity wall 10 to 20 feet high. It will be concrete and will require tie backs on the golf course side. Mr. Haber requested a sketch. (Please see the attached.)

Mr. Popa discussed the impact of the Queens Bus Redesign and public transportation for future employees and residents of these buildings. Mr. Popa inquired about the elimination of the AIRS (Affordable Independent Residences for Seniors), how the water runoff will be managed and how ambulance service will be handled. Mr. Cetin stated that NYC Housing, Development and Preservation (HPD) did away with the AIRS program about a year ago. He also said that civil engineers are looking into the water runoff issue but did say there will be a large, underground retention tank. Mr. Slifkin stated that there will be very limited ambulance service; they will only be used on an as-needed basis. Mr. Popa also asked if there will be electric charging stations for vehicles. Mr. Cetin said they are trying to incorporate that in all their projects as it will be needed in the future.

Mrs. Guidice asked how many parking spots will be provided for Building A, which is the independent living facility. Mr. Palatnik said there will be 163 spots for 126 units. She also asked if services in Building B (assisted living and medical offices) will accept Medicare and Medicaid. Mr. Slifkin stated NY State is not presently issuing licenses for Medicaid; Medicare does not cover long-term care. Therefore, it will be private pay unless they are able to get licensed to accept Medicaid in the future.

Mrs. Guidice commented on how long the buildings are and about their proximity to the Colonial Townhouses on 66 Avenue. Mr. Cetin stated there is 200' between the building and the lot line. Mrs. Guidice asked what preventative measures they are planning to take to keep these buildings safe and insure stability of this area during construction. Mr. Cetin said there will always be site monitoring and the design for a green area will help. Mrs. Guidice remarked that after previous soil testing, the hillside was left a mess and there was a mudslide into the shopping center.

Ms. Cerezo stated she lives in the Colonial Townhouses and remarked about the compromising position they are in with this construction. Mr. Cetin said they are proposing concrete retaining walls and construction will always be monitored. She asked what transportation will be provided for residents and employees. Shuttle vans to the LIRR, the shopping center and other nearby amenities will be provided. Ms. Cerezo asked if there will be a memory care unit in the long-term care facility. Mr. Slifkin said there will be.

Mr. Haber asked if the apartments will be rentals at market rate. Yes, most will be market rate (about $\frac{3}{4}$); some will fall under the 421A tax abatement program. Mr. Palatnik stated that since this program was also eliminated, the buildings need to be completed and signed off by June of 2026 in order to be grandfathered into the program. Mr. Haber also inquired about the height of the ceilings; why are they 12'? Mr. Cetin replied that they are the standard 10' not 12'. Mr. Haber remarked that that does not add up.

Mr. Euler asked how much a unit will cost. The value has not been determined yet. However, the affordable units will be subject to New York State guidelines. They will not be rented at luxury prices. Mr. Euler also inquired about the ingress and egress to the site from 61 Avenue, the slope shared with the shopping center and if an inspection will be required when construction is completed. Mr. Palatnik explained after entering from 61 Avenue, there will be a turn off for the residential building, then a turn off for the long-term care and medical facilities and ultimately, a turn-around for exiting or emergency vehicles. Mr. Cetin said there will be a special engineer assigned to monitor the hillside as well as Dept. of Buildings inspections.

Mr. Montgomery remarked that there is a great deal of blacktop. There should be more green/permeable space. He also inquired as to what the measurement from the lot line to the building will be. It will be 15 to 30 feet. Mr. Montgomery requested contact information. Mr. Montgomery also asked if the lot had been subdivided. It has not.

At this point in the meeting, the applicants and associated representatives exited the meeting. There was lengthy discussion among the Board Members and Scott Solomon, CB11's representative from the Department of City Planning.

Mr. Solomon advised that this application is a for a non-ULURP authorization that only seeks approval of a height authorization allowance pursuant to Section 23-631 of the NYC Zoning Resolution. They are not seeking a zoning map change. Building plans have not yet been approved. Mr. Haber added that all the zoning calculations conform to R4 zoning except for the height of the buildings. Mr. Solomon also advised this application is scheduled to be referred no earlier than January 25, 2023. The Community Board will have 30 days to submit a recommendation from the date of referral.

Mr. Montgomery made a motion to recommend approval of this application for a height authorization as long as no significant changes are made when it is referred. Mrs. Guidice seconded the motion. Discussion ensued regarding the type of application this is and possible conditions to be included in the response.

A roll call vote was taken resulting in four opposed, one in favor and one present. The motion failed.

Respectfully submitted 1/17/2023