

New Housing Planned For Long Island City, Flushing

BY LINDA J. WILSON

Two neighborhoods in Queens are closer to gaining additions to their housing stock after Land Use hearings in Borough Hall last Thursday. At the hearings, presided over by Alexandra Rosa, chief of staff to Borough President Helen Marshall, and Irving Poy, Queens director of planning and development, an application for bulk variances to allow the conversion and enlargement of an existing two-story commercial building at 25-09 38th Ave., Long Island City, to a six-story mixed-use building in an M1-3D (light manufacturing and residential) district was noted by Eric Palatnik, who represented the owner, Dimitrios Spanos, and his fellow attorney, Joseph Morsellino, as having the unanimous support of Community Board 1 as well as the backing of the Dutch Kills Civic Association.

"We designed the building to complement the neighborhood," Palatnik said, adding that at the behest of the community board street trees will be planted when the building is completed and recreation facilities for the tenants of the building as well as a community recreation area will be incorporated in the design.

The commercial space on the building's ground floor will be a modest 3,500 square feet in area, Palatnik added, and will house a business suitable to the neighborhood. "It's a good size space for a deli or a hairdresser, something like that. There won't be any night clubs in there."

A cellar-level garage will provide parking for 14 cars and some-street parking is considered probable. Because the commercial space in the structure is on a relatively small scale, no loading dock will be needed. The commercial space is also too small to require a dumpster for whatever trash is generated, so garbage can be placed in plastic trash bags and held in a separate area in the cellar for pickup by the Department of Sanitation, along with the garbage generated by building residents.

Palatnik added that market rate rents will be charged for the apartments. One-bedroom units will rent for between \$1,400 and \$1,600 per month, and two-bedroom units for between \$2,200 to \$2,800 per month. It is within the realm of possibility.

Community Board 1 unanimously recommended approval of the application, albeit with conditions, at its February meeting.

Also recommended for approval with conditions, in this case at the February meeting of Community Board 7, was an application submitted by Paul F. Bonifilio on behalf of Vincenzo Farruggio to reopen and amend an existing variance to facilitate construction of a detached single-family dwelling in an R2 district located at 153-11 Bayside Ave., Flushing. Bonifilio, representing the property owner, who is also his son-in-law, said that the variances applicable to the site had first been granted in 1993, when a small house had been built on the property. Now, the variances are sought because the 100-foot-long parcel narrows from 40 to 15 feet. It is, however, bounded by through streets on either of its two longer sides, eliminating a front yard requirement for both houses. While the lot narrows, the house being built on the property will have a setback in its design that will provide the illusion of more side yard space.

At its February meeting Community Board 7 recommended approval of the application, but noted that a fence on the property had been taken down. Replacement of the fence, which helps to delineate the border of the property, was requested by the board and acceded to by the developer.

Palatnik also testified on behalf of Yeshiva Tifereth Moshe, now located at 71-02 113th St., Forest Hills, which will be losing its lease in about 18 months and which seeks to move some 250 of its students in its pre-kindergarten pro-

gram through third grade to a facility it has had under construction in an R4 residential district at 147-22 73rd Ave., Flushing. The yeshiva seeks variances from lot coverage, side yard, rear yard, sky exposure plane and setback requirements.

Palatnik said that the yeshiva had started the foundation and then run out of funds, but now is in a position to complete the building. "They did borings to see if they could modify the foundation and found that the water table is quite high at the location—they could only go down about eight feet," he explained. "They can't sink the cellar to the needed depth, and they had to go up instead. The building will be three stories high and complies with the floor area requirements for the site, but exceeds the height limit by 9 feet. That's a violation of the Zoning Resolution, so they are seeking the variances." Four of the five variances sought are driven by the subsurface

water table conditions, Palatnik added; the lone exception is the rear yard variance.

The community does not view the five or six school buses which will drop off the students at scattered times at the start of the school day as a problem, Palatnik added. The buses will line up at the same time to take the children home, but boarding will be quickly accomplished and does not appear likely to pose a problem either, he added. Most of the children attending the school live in the immediate vicinity of the school, as do most of the faculty, so bus traffic is not expected to become excessive.

Rosa asked if an interior space had been allotted to hold garbage until trash pickup times; Palatnik replied in the affirmative. It was also noted that the building's roof would serve as play space and that the fence surrounding the roof was to be 11 feet high instead of nine as had been

originally stipulated to guard against balls being inadvertently thrown through windows of neighboring buildings. Palatnik dismissed this possibility as remote. "These are five- and six-year-olds," he said. "They can't get a ball over a fence that high. If one does, they should sign him up with the Mets."

Palatnik said that Community Board 8 had been overwhelmingly supportive of the plan, recommending approval of the application by 35 votes with one abstention at a public hearing on March 8. The Kew Gardens Hills Civic Association had also expressed approval of the plan and both board and civic association had waived their right to attend the hearings but had asked Palatnik to enter their support for the record. "The block has four shuls already," he said. "The yeshiva is to take a strong role in the community—the community wants it."



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