



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN

SCOTT M. STRINGER
BOROUGH PRESIDENT

February 19, 2008

Recommendation on
ULURP Application No. C 070212 PCM – City Water Tunnel No. 1 Access Site
by the Department of Environmental Protection and
the Department of Citywide Administrative Services

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Pursuant to ZR §197-c, the Department of Environmental Protection (“DEP”) and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (“DCAS”) seek approval of site selection and acquisition of property for use as a maintenance and construction staging area for City Water Tunnel No. 1 (“Tunnel 1”). The proposed action site (Block 246, Lot 1) is located at 257 South Street, near the southeast corner of the block bounded by Cherry, South and Clinton streets and Rutgers Slip.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

DEP and DCAS seek approval of site selection and acquisition of property for use as a maintenance and construction staging area for Tunnel 1, which supplies water to sections of Manhattan, the Bronx, and downtown Brooklyn. The proposed action site is adjacent to a City-owned lot (Block 246, Lot 13) that provides access to Shaft 21 of Tunnel 1. This shaft is the main access point into the water tunnel for personnel, supplies and equipment, and it is only one of two locations where the water tunnel may be dewatered. DEP plans to dewater, inspect, and repair Tunnel 1 upon completion of City Water Tunnel No. 3, which is anticipated to be operational in ten years. DEP and DCAS propose to acquire a portion (approximately 19,792 square feet) of the lot adjacent to the City-owned lot in order to provide adequate space for the equipment and personnel needed for DEP’s planned inspection, maintenance and repair. The dewatering at Shaft 21 is anticipated to last approximately 6 months; however, the length of additional time necessary for reconstruction and repair of the tunnel will not be known until inspection of Tunnel 1 has begun.

The proposed action site is a privately-owned lot that contains a playground. The playground has been closed since around 1997 due to disrepair. DEP proposes to restore the playground prior to the future dewatering of Tunnel 1 at Shaft 21. The plan for the playground includes

equipment and landscaping that can be easily removed when dewatering begins and replaced when dewatering and inspection are done. Further, access to the playground may be disrupted as DEP may require intermittent access to Shaft 21 for ongoing maintenance and inspection of Tunnel 1.

COMMUNITY BOARD'S RECOMMENDATION

At its Full Board meeting held on December 18, 2007, Community Board 3 recommended conditional approval of this application by a vote of 32 in favor, 3 opposed, and 1 recused. The Board's resolution requested that the playground "be maintained as a playground for all periods over the course of the project that construction is not taking place; and that DEP commits to funding the playground in perpetuity."

BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

The maintenance and good repair of the City's water supply system is vital to New York City's basic function. The selection and acquisition of the proposed site, next to Shaft 21, is entirely appropriate for the work that is anticipated for Tunnel 1. The proposed site's use as a construction and maintenance staging area will help ensure that Tunnel 1 continues to function at the highest level possible and maintain an important redundancy in the water supply system when City Water Tunnel No. 3 is fully operational.

The restoration of the site as a playground and open space will provide an important community benefit for the community district. The Borough President recommends that even after playground construction is finished, DEP ensures the playground be maintained so that it does not, once again, fall into disrepair. Proper playground maintenance is important to guarantee public access and safety. DEP should investigate working with the Department of Parks and Recreation to manage the playground and should also make sure that an adequate budget is set aside to maintain the playground.

The environmental analysis of the proposed action indicated that there should be no significant impacts on the surrounding neighborhood. However, the Borough President recommends that DEP carefully manage its future Tunnel 1 dewatering, inspection and maintenance-related activities to avoid or minimize any potential negative impacts on the surrounding community.

Careful attention should be paid to the terms of acquisition for the property. In a time when City-owned property is scarce, this acquisition presents a unique opportunity for the City to guide responsible development for the public interest. Since the proposed action site is located within a C6-4 zoning district, which has a commercial, residential and community facility FAR of 10¹, the City would have the potential to gain a significant amount of development rights, which could be used at a later date to further community development goals. The Borough President recommends that DEP and DCAS acquire the 19,792 square-foot lot area as well as all the development rights associated with the site, including all air rights.

¹ Up to a 12 FAR is allowed under the Inclusionary Housing bonus and both residential and commercial uses may utilize up to a 20% Plaza bonus.

BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION

The applicant has satisfactorily completed all necessary analyses and reviews for site selection and acquisition, and has identified an appropriate location for this necessary City function.

The Manhattan Borough President therefore recommends approval of ULURP Application No. C 070212 PCM.



Scott M. Stringer
Manhattan Borough President