



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

1 Centre Street, 19th floor, New York, NY 10007
(212) 669-8300 p (212) 669-4306 f
163 West 125th Street, 5th floor, New York, NY 10027
(212) 531-1609 p (212) 531-4615 f
www.manhattanbp.nyc.gov

Gale A. Brewer, Borough President

July 23, 2014

Chair Carl Weisbrod
City Planning Commission
22 Reade Street
New York, NY 10007

Re: M 920358F ZSM – Riverside South Minor Modification for Collegiate School

Dear Chair Weisbrod:

I write with concerns regarding Hudson Waterfront Associates L.P. and the Collegiate School's (collectively, the "applicant") application for modifications to the previously approved 1992 Riverside South Large-Scale General Development ("LSGD") special permit pursuant to Section 74-743(b) of the New York City Zoning Resolution ("ZR") and the associated Restrictive Declaration to enable the development of Block 1171, Lot 151 ("Parcel K-2" or the "Project Site") into a nine story building to house the Collegiate School, a K-12 private school with indoor and outdoor recreational space totaling 124,000 square feet of zoning floor area. The Project Site is situated in between West 61st Street and West 62nd Street and Riverside Boulevard and Freedom Place, located on the Upper West Side in Manhattan Community Board 7.

The Project Site is located in the southwest section of the Upper West Side neighborhood, in an R10 zoning district. The surrounding area is a mix of residential, commercial, utility, transportation, and institutional uses. Directly north of the project site are the residential towers 60 Riverside Boulevard and 400 West 63rd Street. Abutting the projects site to the west is 40 Riverside Boulevard (Parcel K-1) of the Riverside South LSGD, which is currently under construction. Further to the west is Riverside South Park, which fronts the Hudson River. To the south is Riverside Center LSGD, a five building residential development that was modified from the Riverside South LSGD in 2010, and to the west is 33 West End Avenue, another residential building.

The project site and the surrounding area have undergone significant redevelopment from mostly industrial and transportation uses to mixed residential and retail uses. In 1992, the City approved several land use actions for the construction of the LSGD known as Riverside South. The Riverside South LSGD runs from West 59th to West 72nd Streets and is generally bounded by West End Avenue and the Riverside Boulevard. The Riverside South LSGD is a mix of residential, retail, and community facility uses organized into 15 development parcels totaling 7.9 million square feet. The LSGD included a number of controls including limits of floor area for use groups, building height controls, mandatory retail frontages, and façade materials. On

this location specifically, the LSGD requires retail frontage along Freedom Place South. In addition, the Riverside South LSGD included a requirement that 12% of the total number of residential units would be affordable. Parcel K1 is currently under construction, leaving parcel K-2 the last remaining development site of the current Riverside South LSGD. Once Parcel K-1 is complete, 10.7% of the units of the entire project will be affordable, leaving 55 affordable units still to be built.

In 2010, the City Planning Commission and the City Council approved a modification to the 1992 LSGD and a series of approvals for parcels L, M, and N, located between West 59th Street and West 61st Street, known as Riverside Center. Parcel's L, M, and N, originally planned to be a television studio, along with a mix of office space, community facility space, and residential uses, were redeveloped into a LSGD of five mixed-use residential towers with ground floor retail. The project included an hotel, a school, and 2.7 acres of privately owned open space. Building 5 of the Riverside Center plan is under construction and Building 2 is in preparation to begin construction shortly.

The applicant proposes to develop a nine story building on Parcel K-2 to be used solely by the Collegiate School for a 640 seat K-12 School. The school will be limited to 124,000 sf and have a maximum height of 193 feet. The School building design includes north and south wings with a central staircase connecting all floors as well as a below-grade gym. The school will have two outdoor play areas, one at grade at the northwest corner of the site and one on the roof of the north wing. The school will have a recessed main entrance along Freedom Place South with service entrances along West 61st Street.

In order to facilitate development, the applicant seeks to modify the 1992 Riverside South LSGD special permit and the 1992 Riverside South Restrictive Declaration. The Riverside South LSGD originally set Parcel K-2 as a residential building. The applicant is requesting modifications to the 1992 LSGD drawings and controls in order to:

- Allow 124,000 sf of Community Facility Space;
- Modify the height of the building plan from a residential tower of 332 feet to a nine story building totaling 193 feet; and
- Modify the design controls pertaining to street wall, ground floor, building envelope, and height to facilitate the at grade playground and recessed entrance and to allow the elimination of the mandatory retail frontage.

The applicant seeks to amend the 1992 Riverside South Restrictive Declaration to reflect the relocation of the required 55 units of affordable housing. The amendment will require that the 55 units be relocated in either one of the future developments at Riverside Center, or 55 existing market rate units will be reallocated as affordable units in Riverside South. The amendment further requires that the relocation of the 55 units be complete prior to the approval of the project site's TCO.

At a joint meeting of the Land Use Committee and Housing Committee of Manhattan Community Board 7 on July 14, 2014 the board approved a resolution recommending disapproval with conditions of the application. The Board did not oppose the change of use from

residential to community facility and supported Collegiate School's goal of occupying the site, noting that the proposed building's overall design was appropriate and the height limit of 193 feet was acceptable. The Board voiced concerns relating to the impact the removal of retail from the ground floor will have on the streetscape and the uncertainty of the relocation of the 55 units of affordable housing. The Board believed that the absence of retail and the erection of a solid wall at the base of the building would result in an unappealing and unsafe streetscape around the school. In its resolution, the Board contends that the current streetscape design does not match the surrounding mixed-use residential and retail environment, deadens the pedestrian experience, and further hinders the connectivity between Riverside South and the neighborhood to the east. Community Board 7 recommends lowering the wall where possible and using transparent materials, plantings, embedded lighting, and other creative treatments.

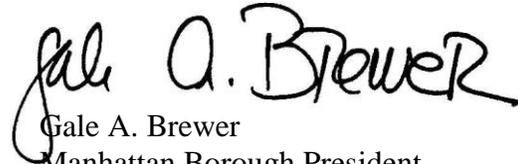
Regarding the relocating of the affordable housing, Community Board 7's Housing and Land Use Committees requested that the applicant work with HPD to ensure that the affordable units be placed into a permanent affordability program, as opposed to the restrictions formalized in the 1992 Riverside South LSGD and the Riverside South Restricted declaration which mandate the units to remain affordable for only 20 years. The Board asked for further confirmation of the applicant's promises that the 55 units would be relocated in either the yet to be built Riverside Center buildings or to appropriate already existing units in one of the already built Riverside South buildings. Further, the Board stipulated that if the units are located in the Riverside Center development they should not count towards the affordability requirements of that project nor should they generate any Inclusionary Housing floor area bonus on that site.

The Collegiate School has a long history on the Upper West Side and educational institutions such as Collegiate provide a needed resource to the community. The relocation of the school to the project site is appropriate and the building design reflects a well thought-out design for the programmatic needs of the school. That notwithstanding, the elimination of ground floor retail and the introduction of a solid wall surrounding a significant portion of the school create an uninviting streetscape and present potential possible public safety issues. As stated in the application, "due to the sheer size of the parcels comprising the 1992 approvals, Riverside South has become something of its own neighborhood." The streetscape controls in the LSGD were created to ensure that this neighborhood had a sufficient amount of services available to it and its residents felt a sense of connectivity to the neighborhood. These sorts of retail requirements are especially important here, where the closest train is nearly four blocks away. The commission should include provisions to ensure that applicant provide a detailed streetscape plan that includes, lighting, landscaping, transparent material, murals, and the possibility of small retail.

The applicant is proposing to relocate 55 units of affordable housing into either the yet to be constructed Riverside Center complex or into 55 already existing units in the Riverside South complex. While the applicant is putting a number of important assurances into the modification of the 1992 Riverside South Restrictive Declaration, the details of this relocation must be confirmed before this application is approved. Since the 1992 Riverside South approvals which only required that 12% of the units to be affordable, New York City's Inclusionary Housing Program has been updated and now requires permanent affordable housing. The City Planning Commission should ensure that these 55 units reflect the current affordable housing requirements and are made to be permanent.

The project being proposed, if altered to ensure that the streetscape is enlivened and if the applicant can confirm the relocation of the affordable units, would be an appropriate addition to the Riverside South and Riverside Center neighborhood. I look forward to continuing to work with the Commission, Community Board 7, and the applicant to ensure that the final design for the project serves the programmatic needs of the school and at the same time while also strengthening the neighborhood surrounding it.

Sincerely,


Gale A. Brewer
Manhattan Borough President