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Gale A. Brewer, Borough President

March 16, 2015

**Recommendation on ULURP Application No. C 150110 ZSM –
551 West 21st Street Parking Garage
by 551 West 21st Owner LLC**

PROPOSED ACTIONS

551 West 21st Street Owner LLC¹ (“the applicant”) seeks approval of a special permit pursuant to Sections 13-45 and 13-451 of the New York City Zoning Resolution (“ZR”), to permit an attended public parking garage with a maximum capacity of 53 spaces within a proposed mixed-use building at 551 West 21st Street (Block 693, Lots 1, 8, and 64) on a corner lot at the intersection of Eleventh Avenue and 21st Street. The site is located in a C6-3 and a M1-5 district within the Special West Chelsea District in Community District 4, Borough of Manhattan.

The special permit pursuant to ZR § 13-45 and 13-451 requires that all of the applicable conditions of ZR § 13-20 (SPECIAL RULES FOR MANHATTAN CORE PARKING FACILITIES) be met and that the findings of §13-45 and 13-451 have been met. These findings are as follows:

- (1) the location of the vehicular entrances and exits to such parking facility will not unduly interrupt the flow of pedestrian traffic associated with uses or public facilities, including access points to mass transit facilities in close proximity thereto, or result in any undue conflict between pedestrian and vehicular movements, due to the entering and leaving movement of vehicles;
- (2) the location of the vehicular entrances and exits to such parking facility will not interfere with the efficient functioning of streets, including any lanes designated for specific types of users or vehicles, due to the entering and leaving movement of vehicles;
- (3) such use will not create or contribute to serious traffic congestion and will not unduly inhibit surface traffic and pedestrian flow;
- (4) for public parking garages, that where any floor space is exempted from the definition of floor area, such additional floor space is needed in order to prevent excessive on-street parking demand and relieve traffic congestion;
- (5) such parking facility will not be inconsistent with the character of the existing streetscape; and

¹ 551 West 21st Street Owner LLC is a subsidiary of SR Capital, founded by Scott Resnick.

- (6) the number of off-street parking spaces in such proposed parking facility is reasonable and not excessive in relation to recent trends in close proximity to the proposed facility with regard to:
- (a) the increase in the number of dwelling units; and
 - (b) the number of both public and accessory off-street parking spaces, taking into account both the construction, if any, of new off-street parking facilities and the reduction, if any, in the number of such spaces in existing parking facilities.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes a 163,269 square foot, 19-story mixed-use building containing 44 market-rate residential units, a two-level commercial use, and an attended public parking garage with 53 spaces. An art gallery is currently proposed as the single tenant for the commercial use on the ground and second floor. The garage will occupy portions of the ground floor and cellar, and the residential units will also be accessed through a lobby on the ground floor. The residential units will be located in floors three through nineteen. Entrances for all of these uses are located off on West 21st Street, and will include a 22-foot wide, two-way curb cut to the garage. In addition, the building, located within Flood Zone A, has opted for dry-proofing the building below the Design Flood Elevation (approximately 10.35 feet), per zoning.

The ground floor level of the proposed garage will consist of a motor court covered by the second floor of the building. This motor court will contain an ADA parking space, five reservoir spaces, and two automobile elevators. The cellar portion of the proposed garage will occupy 6,800 square feet of space with the remaining 52 public parking spaces, which includes 20 double-height vehicle lifts.

Inbound vehicles will access the garage by traveling east on West 21st Street from the intersection of Eleventh Avenue and West 21st Street. Vehicles will enter the site via a 22-foot curb cut on the north side of West 21st Street, which will be located to the east of the building's residential entrance, approximately 110 feet east of Eleventh Avenue. Vehicles will bear right into the motor court, where a customer will leave the vehicle with a parking attendant, who will bring the car down the elevator. Pedestrian access to and from the garage will be through an entrance from the building lobby to the motor court. This access route will be used by both residential parkers and other customers of the parking facility.

Within the cellar portion of the garage will be five public bicycle parking spaces occupying a 40 square-foot area near the vehicle elevators. These spaces are separate from the required bicycle parking for the residential building. Public bicycle parkers will follow the same pattern as described above for other vehicles. Cyclists will enter the motor court, and leave their vehicle with a parking attendant.

Area Context

The project site is located in a C6-3 and a M1-5 zoning district in the Special West Chelsea District in Community Board 4, Manhattan. Adopted by the City Council in 2005, the Special West Chelsea District ("WCh") was designed to promote residential and commercial development, facilitate the transformation of the elevated rail structure into the High Line Park

and fortify the area's art gallery district. It is generally bounded by Tenth and Eleventh Avenues to the east and west and West 15th and 30th Streets to the north and south. Through both building envelope controls and incentive mechanisms, the WCh was designed to move bulk away from the High Line to provide views, light, and air to and from the park, as well as preserve the low-scale character of the neighborhood.

The C6-3 district extends south and north along Eleventh Avenue from West 18th Street to West 28th Street, where it is then mapped along the midblocks between Eleventh and Tenth avenues. A portion of the site lies within a M1-5 district, which extends from West 22nd Street in the north to West 20th Street in the south, Eleventh Avenue to the west and Tenth Avenue to the east, along the midblock portions. Other zoning districts in the area include a C6-2 district to the south and east of the site and another M1-5 district along 11th Avenue to the west. To the south of the site are the West Village, the Gansevoort Historic District, Chelsea Piers and Pier 57. To the north is Hudson Yards and to the immediate eastern end of the block is the High Line. The High Line extends from Gansevoort Street to West 30th Street and is punctuated by meandering paths, seating, planted areas and elevated views of the neighborhood. The High Line's rebirth from defunct elevated railway to a public park has served as a catalyst for development in the neighborhood. To the north and west is Hudson River Park.

In addition to these open spaces, the neighborhood is typified by its three-to-five story walk-up buildings along Tenth Avenue, and commercial and industrial loft spaces along Eleventh Avenue. As a reminder of its industrial past, many low-scale auto repair shops and related facilities, parking facilities, and self-storage buildings remain and are located on the side streets. The nearest subway station is for the C and E trains at 23rd Street and Eighth Avenue, approximately .6 miles away, and immediately adjacent to the proposed parking garage is Route 9A, a major regional thoroughfare. The area is also served by the M23, M12, and M14AD bus lines. There are two Citibike locations within two blocks of the site, which have a combined total of 80 bike docks.

Site Description

The garage site (Lots 1 and 8) is located at 551 West 21st Street (Block 693, Lots 1, 8, and 64) as part of a zoning lot split between a C6-3 and a M1-5 district within the Special West Chelsea District in Manhattan Community District 4. The site is a corner lot with frontage along West 21st Street and Eleventh Avenue.

The 19-story building is being developed on a larger, merged zoning lot comprised of Lots 1, 8, and 64 on Block 693, which approximately totals 27,226 square feet. The proposed parking garage is located within this as-of-right building on Lots 1 and 8. The 19-story building is currently under construction with nine, as-of-right parking spaces. If this application is approved, plans will be revised with the Department of Buildings to reflect the larger parking facility capacity of 53 spaces. On lot 64 is an existing three-story building. A special permit (C 010405 ZSM) was previously approved to allow the Chelsea Art Museum to occupy the three-story building on Lot 64. This building has recently been renovated and is currently occupied by Hewlett Packard for office use. This building is proposed to remain on the zoning lot.

The C6-3 District portion of the site is located with Subarea D of the Special West Chelsea District and is also located within an Inclusionary Housing designated area. The district permits a base floor area ratio (FAR) of 5.0 for residential uses to be increased to 7.5 FAR through a combination of a High Line Transfer and by opting into the Voluntary Inclusionary Housing Program. The maximum permitted FAR for residential, commercial, or community facility uses, either separately or in combination, is 7.5 FAR if these options are exercised. The M1-5 portion of the site limits FAR to 5.0.

Proposed Actions

The applicant proposes a special permit (C 150110 ZSM) pursuant to Sections 13-45 and 13-451 of the Zoning Resolution to permit an attended public parking garage on portions of the ground floor and cellar with a maximum capacity of 53 spaces. 9 spaces would be permitted as-of-right by the Zoning Resolution.

The Building will conform to all other applicable height, setback and floor area regulations.

COMMUNITY BOARD RECOMMENDATION

At its Full Board meeting on February 4, 2015, Manhattan Community Board 4 (“CB4”) voted 18 in favor, 15 opposed, and 0 abstaining to recommend approval with condition of the application. In a letter to the CPC the Board noted that while CB4 is a strong supporter of public transportation, the proposed garage’s location in close proximity to the West Side Highway adjacent to Chelsea Piers makes it unlikely to increase congestion in the area. The Board conditioned its approval on the applicant locating all signage for the garage within the motor court area and not on any street frontage.

BOROUGH PRESIDENT COMMENTS

The Borough President has previously raised concerns with some of the study parameters and underlying assumptions of the residential parking study that accompanies these types of special permit applications. This office has also expressed that proximity to transit and location within the Manhattan core should be a consideration when analyzing the appropriateness of this type of special permit.

The garage that is the subject of this application does not raise these prior concerns. The residential study that accompanies the application clearly lays out the argument for these parking spaces and the proposed capacity amount of 53 spaces is a relatively small increment in comparison to the amount of parking that has both been lost and to the number of new units in the study area. More importantly, this garage is itself small, and will not have an adverse impact on the neighborhood due to its location near a major arterial road at the perimeter of the neighborhood.

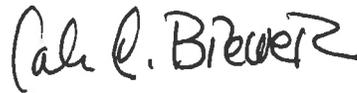
The proposed parking garage includes five bicycle parking spaces, as mandated by the ZR. New Yorkers, however, are unaccustomed to parking bikes inside of public parking garages. In this

garage, the spaces will be located in the cellar and it is unclear if the general public will know that they exist. Moving forward, the City Planning Commission (“CPC”) should work with the Department of Consumer Affairs and the Department of Buildings to ensure that new garages locate the required bike parking in a prominent location, and include bicycle parking rates in all signage.

The applicant, working with the CPC, should examine whether there is sufficient space within the motor court to include these spaces. Furthermore, the applicant should include affordable bicycle parking rates on all signage for this garage. Lastly, the applicant should respond to the Community Board’s concerns regarding exterior facing signage and the Commission should ensure that the street presence of the garage is minimized. One way to accomplish this would be to clearly delineate the location of signage on the ground floor plan and request a note limiting garage signage to areas not directly facing the street.

BOROUGH PRESIDENT RECOMMENDATION

Therefore, the Manhattan Borough President recommends approval of ULURP Application No. C 150110 ZSM.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gale A. Brewer". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Gale A. Brewer
Manhattan Borough President