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Gale A. Brewer, Borough President

July 22, 2019

Recommendation on ULURP Application C 190277 ZSM – 121 Chambers Street By 121 Chambers St LLC

121 Chambers St LLC (“the applicant”) seeks a special permit pursuant to Section 74-711 of the Zoning Resolution (“ZR”) to modify the height regulations of ZR § 111-20(c)(2) (Special regulations for narrow buildings) to facilitate the construction of a vertical enlargement on an existing building at 121 Chambers Street (Block 145, Lot 10) located in the Special Tribeca Mixed Use District (Area 3 – C6-3A) and the Tribeca South Historic District in Community Board 1, Manhattan.

Pursuant to ZR § 74-711, applicants may request a special permit to modify the bulk regulations of zoning lots that contain landmarks or are within Historic Districts as designated by the Landmarks Preservation Commission (“LPC”). In order for the City Planning Commission (“CPC”) to grant bulk modifications, the applicant must first meet the following conditions:

- 1) LPC has issued a report stating that the applicant will establish a continuing maintenance program for the preservation of the building and that such modification or restorative work will contribute to a preservation purpose;¹
- 2) The application shall include a Certificate of Appropriateness, other permit, or report from LPC stating that such bulk modifications relate harmoniously to the subject landmark building in the Historic District;²
- 3) The maximum number of permitted dwelling units is as set forth in ZR § 15-111.

Additionally, as this site is located within Area 3 of the Tribeca Mixed Use District and is less than 45 feet in width, there are special regulations for narrow buildings that apply to the site that the applicant is seeking to be waived:

A building or portion of a building may be constructed above the maximum height of street wall permitted pursuant to ZR § 23-692 (Height limitations for narrow buildings or enlargements), provided such portion of a building exceeding such height limitation does not exceed a height of one story or 15 feet, whichever is less, and provided such portion of a building is set back at least 10 feet from the street wall of the building facing a wide street, and 15 feet from the street wall of a building facing a narrow street.

¹ The LPC issued a report, dated March 15, 2019.

² The LPC issued a Certificate of No Effect (CNE 19-22596) on March 12, 2018 and the Certificate of Appropriateness (COFA #19-26119) on January 28, 2019.

Further, in order to grant a special permit, the CPC must find that:

- 1) The modifications shall have minimal adverse effects on the structures or open space in the vicinity in terms of scale, location and access to light and air;
- 2) Such modifications shall have minimal adverse effects on the conforming uses within the building and in the surrounding area.

PROJECT SITE DESCRIPTION

The applicant seeks a special permit pursuant to ZR § 74-711 to modify the height regulations of 111-20(c)(2) to facilitate the construction of a vertical enlargement which would result in an increase in the height of the building from 90'1" to 93'4". The building is presently 5 stories and while the requested enlargement is only 3'3", as of right interior alternations to the floors would create two additional floors, resulting in a 7-story building with retail/restaurant on the ground floor and 8 market-rate residential rental units on the second to seventh floors.

The project site is located within the Special Tribeca Mixed Use District, with a C6-3A zoning designation and it is also within the Tribeca South Historic District. C6 zoning districts permit Use Groups 1 through 12 as-of-right. The special district does have additional regulations. The project site is within Area 3 of the special district which allows some uses in Use Groups 16 and 17. The commercial maximum floor area ratio (FAR) is 6.0 and the residential maximum FAR is 7.52.

Background

According to the applicant, 121 Chambers Street is a 5-story building with a cellar and sub-cellar. The project site is a through lot between Chambers Street and Reade Street and the existing building on the site takes up the entire project site. The existing building contains 18,675 square feet of floor area (4.65 FAR) with 11,205 square feet of floor area for residential use (2.97 FAR) and 7,470 square feet of floor area for commercial use (1.98 FAR).

The buildings adjacent to the project site to the east (119 Chambers Street) and west (123 Chambers Street) are six-story mixed-use buildings with retail on the ground floor and residential on the upper floors. These adjacent buildings have as-of-right additions that have increased their heights to 79'10" and 83'3" respectively. Along the Reade Street frontage of the proposed site, the building to the east (97-101 Reade Street) is an 8-story mixed use building (residential and retail) that is 93'8" in height and the building to the west of the proposed site (105 Reade Street) is a 5-story commercial building that is 75'11" in height. Buildings in the surrounding area are generally 5 to 7-story buildings that are residential or mixed residential and commercial buildings.

Area Context

The project site is located in Community District 1 in Manhattan. In 1992, the Tribeca South Historic District was established, covering approximately 70 buildings over four blocks between West Broadway, Chambers Street, and Thomas Streets. In 2002, the Tribeca South Historic

District Extension, located immediately south of the project site, was created. The area surrounding the project site is comprised mostly of buildings that were constructed in the mid-1800s for wholesale dry goods merchants. They are typically 25 feet wide with cast-iron facades on the ground floor and either brick or cast iron facades on the upper floors.

There are several individual landmarks in the surrounding area including the David S. Brown Store (8 Thomas Street), The Cary Building (105 Chambers), Swift Seaman & Co (122 Chambers Street), Broadway & Chambers Building (273 Broadway, Firehouse Engine No. 29 (160 Chambers Street), and Fire Engine Company No.7/Hook & Ladder No.1 (100 Duane Street).

The neighborhood generally consists of five and six-story mixed-use buildings, with ground floor retail and residential on the upper floors. Newer buildings in the area are between 8 and 13-stories. Within 600 feet of the proposed site, there is one building that exceeds 13 stories, a 28-story converted residential loft building at 270 Broadway. East of the proposed site is the civic center, with many taller office buildings.

The project site is served by the A, C, E trains at Chambers Street (Church Street), the 1, 2, 3 lines at Chambers Street (West Broadway), and the R, W lines at City Hall Station. Further east from the project site are the 4, 5, 6 trains at Brooklyn Bridge Station. The M5, M9, M20, and M22 lines are also in the area surrounding the project site.

Proposed Actions

The applicant seeks a special permit pursuant to ZR § 74-711 for a waiver of the one-story and height limit of ZR §111-20(c)(2) in order to allow the construction of a seventh floor on the existing building at the project site. The project site is located within Area 3 of the Special Tribeca Mixed Used District which, under ZR §111-20(c)(2), allows a narrow building within this area to be constructed above the maximum height permitted by ZR §23-692, provided such portion does not exceed the lower of 1-story or 15 feet. The height of the existing building is 75'1" and the applicant seeks to build to 93'4", or 3"3' above what is permitted as-of-right.

According to ZR § 15-111, the maximum number of dwelling units allowed is the maximum amount of residential FAR permitted on the zoning lot divided by 680. The maximum residential floor area in Area 3 of the Tribeca Mixed Use District is 7.52. The lot size is 3,771 square feet, which allows for approximately 28,358 maximum residential floor area or 41 units. The proposed development has ground floor commercial (3,735 square feet) which reduces the maximum residential floor area to 24,623 and 36 units. The proposed development will have 20,879 square feet of residential floor area and 8 units after renovation.

COMMUNITY BOARD RECOMMENDATION

On May 28, 2019 at the full board meeting, Community Board 1 voted to approve this application with 35 voting in favor, 1 opposed, and 1 recusal.

BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

While I am generally opposed to increases in height for buildings, this special permit will only allow an increase of 3'3" above what is permitted as of right and is contextual with the surrounding buildings. Additionally, the applicant will restore the storefronts of the building to their original 19th century appearance. The applicant, and all subsequent owners, will be required to maintain these improvements in perpetuity, as part of a restrictive declaration to be filed on the property. This will ensure that the building's architectural history will be preserved for future generations. While outside the scope of this application, I do implore the applicant to seek retail tenants that are local, small businesses that provide much needed services to the surrounding community.

BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION

Therefore, the Manhattan Borough President recommends approval of ULURP Application NO. C 190277 ZSM.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gale A. Brewer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gale A. Brewer
Manhattan Borough President