



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
431 West 125th Street, New York, NY 10027
(212) 531-1609 p (212) 531-4615 f
www.manhattanbp.nyc.gov

Gale A. Brewer, Borough President

August 23, 2019

**Recommendation on ULURP Application No. 190390ZMM
25 Central Park West
By American Continental Properties**

PROPOSED ACTIONS

American Continental Properties (the “Applicant”) is seeking an amendment to the Zoning Map, Section No. 8c, to map a C2-5 commercial overlay to a depth of 100 feet along the western side of Central Park West between West 62nd and West 63rd Streets. The action would legalize three existing commercial units in 25 Central Park West, a mixed use building located in the Upper West Side neighborhood of Manhattan Community Board 7 (Block 1115, Lot 7501). The building is currently only allowed to have Use Group 6 establishments. The C2-5 overlay would allow Use Groups 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 14 and allow the Applicant to seek a permit for a Physical Culture Establishment (PCE) for one of their commercial spaces.

In considering this land use action, the office of the Manhattan Borough President must evaluate the proposed zoning map changes for consistency and accuracy. Given the land use implications, this office must also assess the appropriateness for the potential growth, improvement, and development of the neighborhood and borough.

BACKGROUND

Area Context

This portion of the Upper West Side along Central Park West is zoned primarily R8 and R10A, with the denser zoning district mapped along the avenue and north of West 62nd Street and the R8 districts located in some of the midblocks. A C4-7 district is mapped along the other midblocks, as well as along Broadway and Columbus Avenue, which make up the main commercial corridors in the area. The westernmost 50 feet of 25 Central Park West, which is located in the rear of the building, fall within the Special Lincoln Square District. The Special District was established in 1969 with the goal of protecting and promoting the “unique cultural and architectural complex” that is Lincoln Square and to improve the circulation of pedestrians, vehicular traffic and public transit.

25 Central Park West is part of a row of residential and commercial buildings that were built along Central Park West between 1880 and 1930. The building, which was built in 1931, is also referred to as the Century Apartments and was individually landmarked in 1985.

The building is 2 blocks away from the 59th Street Columbus Station, which provides service to the A, B, C, D, E, and 1 subway lines. In addition, the West 66th Street 1 subway station is one

avenue over on Broadway. The M10 and M20 buses, which provide uptown and downtown service, respectively, have stops along Central Park West. The M66 bus, which provides crosstown service, stops two blocks to the north of the building at West 65th Street. The Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts is two avenues to the west on Amsterdam Avenue, as are Fordham University and the John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Mt. Sinai West, a full-service medical center, is less than a half mile away. The building is across from Central Park and near to passive recreation spaces, including Dante Park, Richard Tucker Park, and Hearst Plaza.

Site Description

25 Central Park West was built under the 1916 Zoning Resolution. Pursuant to that text, the building was in a “Business District” allowing commercial uses, which existed on the ground floor of the building. When the Zoning Resolution was modified in 1961, the building was zoned R10, making the commercial uses non-conforming but grandfathered. The majority of the building—located on the eastern side—is currently zoned R10A. The western (rear portion of the building) is zoned C4-7. The commercial overlay would be situated solely within the R10A portion of the site.

The building is 32 stories in height and contains 422 residential units, three commercial units, and medical offices. The three commercial spaces include a dry cleaner, a hair salon, and a drugstore. The Applicant expects that the drugstore will vacate its space within the next year and plans to rent that commercial space to a PCE.

COMMUNITY BOARD RESOLUTION

On July 2, 2019, CB7 voted to deny the application. At a June 19, 2019 hearing, members of the Board expressed its concern about setting a precedent, particularly because other residential buildings to the north of 25 Central Park West do not include ground floor commercial uses. The Board expressed a concern that commercial spaces along Central Park West would “compete with the commercially zoned avenues” in the neighborhood. The Board also argued that the commercial overlay, which extends 100 feet west of Central Park West, is excessive because the commercial units of the building extend only 45 feet. In its resolution, CB7 did not outline any conditions under which it would approve the application.

BOROUGH PRESIDENT’S COMMENTS

Although I am a strong supporter of the mom-and-pop shops, which help maintain neighborhood vitality, I understand that the lack of pedestrian traffic around 25 Central Park West will make it difficult for a Use Group 6 establishment to be successful. The Applicant has received interest from a yoga studio that was seeking commercial space and although that particular business was able to secure a commercial space elsewhere, the Applicant believes that this type of business would be more viable. Additionally, the building does not currently have a gym for residents.

The proposed commercial space could, as the Applicant notes, create a transition from the busy commercial activity along 8th Avenue, to the residential uses along Central Park West. In achieving this goal, I would like to emphasize the importance of activating the storefront in a way that engages passers-by. In an attempt to provide privacy for their customers, far too many

PCEs block views of their spaces from the street. Still, other PCEs have managed to balance their need for privacy with having an attractive storefront by placing small cafes, shops, or front desk services at the front of their commercial spaces. I urge the applicant to incorporate similar strategies. Such considerations should be taken under the advisement of the building's residents.

Regarding the depth of the proposed C2-5 overlay, commercial overlays typically range from 100 to 200 feet in depth. Making the overlay shorter in order to encompass only the existing commercial spaces raises issues about spot zoning. I believe the applicant should adhere to the standard 100 foot minimum.

BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION

Therefore, the Manhattan Borough President recommends **approval** of ULURP Application No. 190390ZMM with the following conditions:

1. The Applicant commits to implementing design features and programming to ensure that the storefront is activated; and
2. The Applicant agrees to work with the building's residents as they plan for changes in tenancy and/or design of the commercial space that result from this land use action.

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