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Mark D. Levine, Borough President

September 29, 2022

## **Recommendation on Block 675 – EMS Station 7 - ULURP Application No. C220468PCM By FDNY and NYCDCAS**

### **PROPOSED ACTIONS**

The New York City Fire Department (“FDNY”) and the New York City Department of Citywide Administrative Services (“DCAS”), collectively the “Applicants,” are proposing several actions to relocate the existing Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Station 7 from its current temporary location at 512 West 23<sup>rd</sup> Street (Block 694, Lot 40) to 613 West 29<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan (Block 675, part of Lot 12; the “Development Site”). Both sites are in Community District 4 in Manhattan.

The Applicants are requesting approval for the acquisition and selection of the Development Site.

### **BACKGROUND**

#### **Area Context**

The Development Site is located within Manhattan Community District 4 in the West Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan. The site is on West 29<sup>th</sup> Street, between 12<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Avenues, and extends 331 feet east of 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The Special Hudson Yards District is located north of the Development Site.

The Hudson River is approximately 400 feet west of the Development Site, and along its coast is Hudson River Park, the longest riverfront park in the United States. The Development Site is within walking distance of multiple open spaces, including the Hudson River Park and Greenway, Bella Abzug Park, Chelsea Park, Chelsea Waterside Park, and the High Line. The Development Site is also within walking distance to numerous transit options, including the 7 Train located at the Hudson Yards Station, approximately 900 feet north of the site, while nearby bus routes include the M11 and M12, which run north and south along 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and the M23 and M34-SBS buses, which run crosstown and along 23<sup>rd</sup> and 34<sup>th</sup> Streets respectively.

#### **Special West Chelsea District**

In 2005, the Special West Chelsea District was created as a direct response to the redevelopment of the High Line, an elevated rail line running north-south through the length of the district that was repurposed as a large public urban park. To facilitate the public use of the High Line, the special district was established to permit a floor area transfer mechanism to preserve light, air, views, and floor area bonuses related to access and open space development. The special district

also fostered the development of a dynamic mixed commercial and residential district centered around the High Line which contributed to the commercial characteristics of the area.

### **Special Hudson Yards District**

In January 2005, the New York City Council approved a comprehensive rezoning of the Hudson Yards area that would transform the western edge of Manhattan into a high-density extension of the Midtown business district and include residential, cultural, and retail uses, as well as open space. The rezoning has permitted 24 million square feet of new space, including 13,500 new residential units, one million square feet of new retail, two million square feet of new hotels, and more.

### **Temporary Relocation of EMS Station 7 and Block 675 Development**

Upon the closure of St. Vincent’s Hospital in 2010, EMS Station 7 moved from that location to a temporary, unenclosed space under the High Line at 512 West 23<sup>rd</sup> Street.

In 2017, Douglaston Development proposed to redevelop Block 675. The proposal required discretionary actions, including a rezoning, which underwent the City’s Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP). Douglaston’s project, which was approved, will include a 740,615 square foot mixed-use building at 601 West 29<sup>th</sup> Street. As part of its discussions with the community during the ULURP process, Douglaston committed to dedicating a portion of Lot 12 for the permanent relocation of EMS Station 7.

Amtrak holds a construction easement on the undeveloped proportion of Lot 12 until 2032. That easement is intended to facilitate the construction of the Gateway project, a \$16 billion infrastructure project that will provide greater, more reliable service on the North East Corridor rail line, which serves Amtrak and NJ Transit commuters. In September 2022, officials announced an updated timeline for the project, which moved the date of completion from 2035 to 2038.

### **PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

The Proposed Development is a three-story building with a height of approximately 43 feet. The 18,068 square foot EMS Station 7 facility would be built on a 12,500 square foot portion of Block 675, Lot 12, which is immediately west of the 601 West 29<sup>th</sup> Street development that is currently under construction. The proposed EMS station will serve approximately 80 FDNY staff, and would provide the staff with 18 parking spaces, support for ambulances – including equipment for refueling, restocking, and cleaning – office space, and locker space for EMS personnel.

Given the timeline of the Gateway Project, the Applicants propose to commence construction of the new EMS facility upon the termination of the easement in 2032. Completion of the new EMS facility would be expected by 2034.

## **Site Description**

The Development Site is in the West Chelsea neighborhood in Manhattan Community District 4. It is located on Block 675, Lot 12 and extends east from West 29<sup>th</sup> Street to 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The privately owned lot includes 525 feet of frontage along West 29<sup>th</sup> Street and 197 feet of frontage along 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

Land uses in the surrounding area include a mix of industrial, commercial, residential, and open spaces. The neighborhood around the site includes M2-4 and M1-5 zones to the south, with building heights of less than 300 feet. Notable sites south of the proposed development include the Terminal Warehouse and the Starrett Lehigh Building. Immediately south and west of the site are parking lots, one of which is owned and operated by Consolidated Edison. To the east of the site are C6-4 and C6-3 districts. Commercial corridors are farther east from the site at 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue, between West 18<sup>th</sup> and West 25<sup>th</sup> Streets and between West 35<sup>th</sup> and West 39<sup>th</sup> Streets. In contrast, higher and denser buildings are scattered throughout the eastern part of the neighborhood and are mostly located northeast of West 30<sup>th</sup> Street and 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue, within Hudson Yards. Directly north of the Development Site is the Western Rail Yard, which will soon be redeveloped.

## **COMMUNITY BOARD RESOLUTION**

Manhattan Community Board 4 (“CB4”) held a public hearing regarding the application on July 18, 2022. During this hearing and in subsequent Board meetings, members and the public were concerned that the timeline for the Gateway Project would further delay securing an adequate facility for EMS Station 7, that the proposed facility included too many parking spots, and about quality-of-life issues.

On September 7, 2022, CB4 voted to recommend approval of the application with the condition that the Mayor’s Office and the Applicants work with Gateway Project officials to find “an immediate resolution to the outdoor site at West 23<sup>rd</sup>” that “will facilitate the relocation and construction of a new facility for EMS Station 7 on Block 675.”

## **BOROUGH PRESIDENT’S COMMENTS**

As the city grows, it’s crucial that our infrastructure adapt to serve the expanding need for municipal services. FDNY EMS Station 7 has outgrown its current facility. As EMS call volumes increase and more residents move to the Clinton, West Chelsea, and Hudson Yards neighborhoods, the need for a new, right-sized facility becomes more urgent.

The existing EMS station supports five ambulances in addition to other administrative and equipment needs for EMS staff. However, it currently runs eight ambulances and is operating at capacity. In contrast, the proposed 18,068 square foot EMS Station 7 facility would be able house eight EMS vehicles and one supervisor SUV, much better suited to meet the rising demand in the area.

Finding a proper site for this station is a matter of public health and safety. For over 10 years, the west side of Manhattan has relied on emergency services that are housed in a temporary, partially unenclosed facility. I agree with CB4 that the community deserves an EMS station that meets not only the current needs, but also the projected needs as new buildings in the area come online. The unenclosed, temporary facility cannot continue to be the status quo while the Gateway Project is under development. Residents, workers, and EMS staff must have a reasonable, adequate, and safe EMS station as soon as possible.

### **BOROUGH PRESIDENT’S RECOMMENDATION**

Therefore, the Manhattan Borough President **recommends approval** of ULURP Application No. C220468PCM **with the condition** that the Applicants work with Gateway Project officials to either find an alternative solution for the staging area of the Gateway Project or immediately identify an adequate, enclosed facility for EMS Station 7.



Mark Levine  
Manhattan Borough President