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Mark Levine, Borough President

January 5, 2023

Recommendation on ULURP Application No. N220434ZRM – 15-21 West 124th Street By Harlem LLC

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Harlem LLC (“The Applicant”) is seeking a text amendment to Section 97-50 of the New York City Zoning Resolution to change parking requirements for R6A zoning districts within the Special 125th Street District. The zoning text amendment would effectively waive accessory parking requirements for the proposed residential building at 15-21 West 124th Street (Block 1722, Lots 26 and 27) in the Harlem neighborhood in Community Board 10 (the “Proposed Building”).

BACKGROUND

The proposed development site is located in an R6A zoning district within the 125th Street Special District, a special purpose district created to preserve, protect, and promote the character of 125th Street, guide development on 125th Street, expand retail and commercial uses, support mixed-use development, and ensure that new development is compatible with 125th Street, among other goals.

Residential buildings in R6A zoning districts are required to provide off-street parking spaces for 50% of the total number of residential units. The Applicant is seeking a zoning amendment to allow R7-2 parking regulations to apply to three R6A districts within the 125th Street District. R7-2 regulations require off-street parking for 50% of units but allow reductions in certain cases: Lots between 10,001 and 15,000 square feet can reduce parking to 30% of units, and lots eligible for 11 or fewer spaces can get a full parking waiver. Under the current R6A regulations, the Proposed Building would need 17 parking spaces for its 33 units (50% of units). But with the proposed R7-2 regulations, the 30% requirement would be 10 spaces, making it eligible for a full waiver of the parking requirement.

Proposed Development

The proposed development site consists of two adjacent tax lots: a 2,523 square foot lot (Lot 26), and a 7,569 square foot lot (Lot 27), totaling 10,092 square feet. Lot 26 contains a vacant three-story building, and Lot 27 contains a vacant four-story building. Both lots are located within an R6A zoning district. The Proposed Building is a seven-story residential rental building containing 33 two- or three-bedroom rental units. The building would total approximately 49,012 gross square feet, including 37,485 square feet of residential space, and 797 square feet

for community facility uses. The building would also include community amenity spaces for building residents.

Area Context

The Development Site and Project Area are located in R6A zoning districts within the Special 125th Street District. The surrounding area includes a mix of contextual commercial and residential districts including C4-4A, C4-4D, C4-7, R7-2, R7B, and R7A. There are many institutional uses in the surrounding area including churches, schools, and the New York Public Library Harlem branch. The Proposed Building is across the street from Marcus Garvey Park. The Langston Hughes House, an individual landmark, and the Mount Morris Historic District are located to the north of the Proposed Building's site.

The Proposed Building site is located within a Transit Zone, a mapped area with low car ownership rates and easily accessible public transit options. The Proposed Building site is well-served by mass transportation including five Subway lines, nine bus lines, and the Metro-North station two blocks east of the site. There are also several Citi Bike stations and parking garages located within 1.5 miles providing over 2,400 parking spaces. The Applicant has cited 2015-2019 American Community Survey data, which found that household vehicle ownership rates in the relevant census tracts were 20% among renter-occupied households.

COMMUNITY BOARD RESOLUTIONS

Although the Proposed Building is in Manhattan Community Board 10, the proposed zoning text amendment would affect Manhattan Community Board 10 and Manhattan Community Board 11. The Applicant presented to Community Board 10's Land Use Committee on November 16, 2023 and to Community Board 11's Land Use Committee on December 13, 2023. On December 3rd, 2023, Community Board 10 voted to recommend disapproval of the proposal. On December 19, 2023, Community Board 11 voted to recommend disapproval of the proposal.

Members of Community Board 10 raised concerns about the impact of congestion pricing on parking demand in Harlem, existing parking challenges in the community, the current cost of parking in the area, safety concerns surrounding the curb cut and Marcus Garvey Park Playground, and potential effects of construction on Harlem Village Academy's West Lower Elementary and expressed a preference that the applicant hire local residents for the construction of the project. Community Board 11 raised concerns about the accuracy of the parking study in relation to district parking needs and expressed a desire for community facility space on the site.

BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

Our city is in the midst of the gravest housing shortage in its history, with average rents in Manhattan now at a staggering \$5,500 per month. It is imperative that we increase the housing supply in both our borough and our city to address this crisis.

In a neighborhood well-served by public transit and off-street parking, where car ownership sits below 20%, we cannot afford to put cars ahead of people.

Waiving parking minimums for this development site would eliminate the need for costly underground parking construction that would disrupt surrounding community amenities. Without

required on-site parking, the project can forgo excavation and construction of underground spaces, enhancing its viability. More importantly, this minimizes disturbances to the adjacent New York Public Library branch and Marcus Garvey Park entrance across the street, which provide valuable services to neighborhood residents. The text amendment granting a parking requirement waiver is essential for protecting these cherished institutions while enabling sorely needed housing units.

I encourage the developer to heed CB 10's and 11's recommendations to coordinate closely with the nearby Harlem Village Academy's West Lower Elementary school during construction, and to prioritize local hiring for the construction of the project.

By sparing the library and park from disruptions and making the project more viable, this amendment serves the community and furthers our city's housing goals.

BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION

I therefore recommend **approval** of ULURP application No. N220434ZRM.



Mark Levine
Manhattan Borough President