

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ZONING AND
FRANCHISES

----- X

July 28, 2022
Start: 12:01 p.m.
Recess: 1:50 p.m.

HELD AT: HYBRID HEARING - COMMITTEE ROOM -
CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Kevin C. Riley, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Shaun Abreu
Erik D. Bottcher
David M. Carr
Kamillah Hanks
Farah N. Louis
Francisco P. Moya
Tiffany Caban

A P P E A R A N C E S

Jaclyn Scarinci
Leon Huvsepian
Jarolyn Diaz
Eric Palatnik
Frank St. Jacques
Kenneth Chiang
Thomas Gresch
Robert Huberman
Jay Valgora
Ken Smith
Jason Diaz
Rev. Hassan Clark
Carlos Cano
Victoria Kammer
Dr. Anju Rupchandani
Pastor Corwin Mason
Claudia Coger
Anna Ortega

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good afternoon,
3 everyone. Welcome to today's hybrid New York City
4 Council meeting of the Subcommittee on Zoning and
5 Franchise.

6 Please place electronic devices to
7 vibrate or silent.

8 If you wish to submit testimony, you may
9 send it to landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov. Again,
10 that's landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov.

11 Thank you for your cooperation. Chair, we
12 are ready to begin.

13 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: [GAVEL] Good
14 afternoon, and welcome to a meeting of the
15 Subcommittee of Zoning and Franchises. I am Council
16 Member Kevin Riley, Chair of the Subcommittee.

17 This afternoon, I am joined in the
18 Chambers by Council Member Moya, Chair Louis, Council
19 Member Bottcher, and Council Member Hanks.

20 Today, we will vote on one rezoning
21 proposal for 1810 Randall Avenue in the Bronx that
22 the Subcommittee will hear today. We will also hold
23 public hearings for 3 rezoning proposals, one in my
24 District in the Bronx for 1959 Strang Avenue and 2 in
25

2 Queens for 231-06 Northern Boulevard and Halletts
3 North.

4 Before we begin, I recognize the
5 Subcommittee Counsel to review the hearing
6 procedures.

7 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: This meeting is
8 being held in hybrid format. Members of the
9 Subcommittee are required to meet in person. Members
10 of the public who wish to testify may do so in person
11 or via Zoom. Members of the public wishing to testify
12 remotely were asked to register for today's hearing.

13 If you wish to testify and have not
14 already registered, please do so now by visiting the
15 New York City Council website at
16 www.council.nyc.gov/landuse to sign up.

17 Members of the public may also view a
18 livestream broadcast of this meeting at the Council's
19 website.

20 If you need an accessible version of any
21 of the presentations shown today, please send an
22 email request to landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov.

23 When called to testify, individuals
24 appearing before the Subcommittee will remain muted
25 until recognized by the Chair.

2 Applicant teams will be recognized as a
3 group and called first followed by members of the
4 public.

5 When the Chair recognizes, if you are
6 joining us remotely, your microphone will be unmuted.
7 Please take a moment to check your device and confirm
8 that your mic is on before you begin speaking.

9 Public testimony will be limited to 2
10 minutes per witness. If you have additional testimony
11 you would like the Subcommittee to consider or if you
12 have written testimony to submit instead of appearing
13 here before the Subcommittee, you may email it to
14 landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov. Please indicate the
15 LU number or the project name in the subject line of
16 your email.

17 Witnesses joining remotely are requested
18 to remain in the meeting until excused by the Chair
19 as Council Members may have questions.

20 Finally, there will be pauses over the
21 course of this hybrid meeting for various technical
22 reasons, and we ask that you please be patient as we
23 work through any issues.

24 Chair Riley will now continue with
25 today's agenda items.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Counsel. I
3 just want to state for the record we've been joined
4 by Council Member Carr and Council Member Abreu.

5 I will now open the public hearing on
6 Preconsidered LU C 220203 ZMX and N 220204 ZRX
7 relating to the 1810 Randall Avenue rezoning proposal
8 in Council Member Farias' district in the Bronx. This
9 application seeks a zoning map amendment to rezone
10 existing R4/C1-2 and a R5/C1-2 zoning district to an
11 R6/C1-2 zoning district and the related zoning text
12 amendment to establish an MIH program area.

13 For anyone wishing to testify on this
14 item remotely, if you have not already done so, you
15 must register online, and you may do that now by
16 visiting the Council's website at
17 council.nyc.gov/landuse.

18 Council Member Farias is unable to join
19 us today but sent a statement in support that I would
20 like to read on the record on her behalf.

21 I have been working closely with all
22 parties involved in this project since November 2021
23 including the developer, the church, and the greater
24 community to ensure the members of the church have a
25 leading role in the process and there is a direct

benefit to the needs of the district. I am proud to say we have come to this place in the development and city planning process because of the direct work with several informational sessions, outreach, and education to neighbors and the surrounding area and additional community benefits requests fulfilled. I feel confident in moving this project forward through the city planning approval process. This will be 100 percent affordable senior housing through the SARA program with a rolling voucher for every unit, and I have allocated 1.5 million from my capital budget for the FY-2023 to ensure the groundbreaking of this project occurs in 2022. I want everyone voting on this project today to know how important necessary senior and affordable housing is to my district, and my office has worked hard to ensure that this development is equitable by and for the community it will be serving. Because of this, I urge all of my Colleagues to vote yes on the 1810 Randall Avenue project. That ends council Member Farias' statement.

Counsel, please call the first panel for this item.

2 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: The applicant panel
3 for this item will include Jacklyn Scarinci, Leon
4 Huvsepian, and participating remotely Jarolyn Diaz.

5 Applicants, please raise your right
6 hands. I'll ask each of you in turn by name.

7 Do you swear or affirm that the testimony
8 you're about to give will be the truth, the whole
9 truth, and nothing but the truth and that you'll
10 answer all questions by Council Members truthfully.
11 Miss Scarinci.

12 JACLYN SCARINCI: (INAUDIBLE)

13 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Leon Huvsepian.
14 Sorry if I'm mispronouncing that.

15 LEON HUVSEPIAN: (INAUDIBLE)

16 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Jerilyn Diaz.

17 JAROLYN DIAZ: Yes.

18 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. For the
20 viewing public, if you need an accessible version of
21 this presentation, please send an email request to
22 landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov.

23 Now, the applicant team may begin.
24 Panelists, as you begin, I'll just ask that you
25

2 please restate your name and organization for the
3 record. You may begin.

4 JACLYN SCARINCI: Good afternoon, Chair
5 Riley and Members of the Zoning and Franchises
6 Subcommittee. My name is Jacklyn Scarinci of Akerman,
7 LLP, Land Use Counsel for the applicants which are
8 comprised of the owner, the Casa de la Fe Church, and
9 also Vertical Community Developers, the developer of
10 the project. I'm joined here this afternoon with Leon
11 Huvsepian, the Vice President of Vertical Community
12 Developers, and we're here to present the proposed
13 rezoning of the property known as 1810 Randall Avenue
14 which will facilitate the redevelopment of a site
15 with new mixed building of senior affordable housing
16 and bring back the current church, Casa de la Fe,
17 House of Faith. Next slide, please.

18 The project site is comprised of 3 tax
19 lots that encompass the entire block front on Randall
20 Avenue between Beach and Taylor. This is just west of
21 the major intersection of Soundview and Randall
22 Avenue which are wide zoning streets. The project
23 site is a rectangular zoning lot with 200 feet of
24 frontage on Randall and then 100 feet on both Beach
25 and Taylor. The sites are currently zoned R4 and R5A,

2 and there are 6- and 7-story buildings located 2
3 blocks west of the site in the NYCHA Soundview Houses
4 as well as a number of higher density buildings just
5 outside of the 600-foot radius that you see here. The
6 project site has access to a number of bus lines in
7 the area with a bus stop for the Bx27 directly in
8 front of the site and it has access to the Bx5, Bx39,
9 and Bx36 bus lines. Next slide, please.

10 As you can see from the existing
11 conditions today, the site is improved with the Casa
12 de la Fe Church which was a converted theatre so it
13 is in need of upgrading to provide the classroom and
14 programming space that the church needs to carry out
15 their mission. Also, Casa de la Fe has a significant
16 presence in the community but is in need of
17 rehabilitating this space. There's also an unimproved
18 parking lot on the site today. Next slide, please.

19 The applicant team has been engaging with
20 Community Board 9 and Council Member Farias on this
21 project as you heard in her statement, and this
22 project is able to hit on a number of the major
23 community District 9 needs which include affordable
24 housing, senior services, public safety, youth and
25 children services because the church provides much

1 needed affordable enrichment programs for children,
2 and neighborhood preservation by avoiding
3 displacement of residential units. There's currently
4 no residential use on the site today. Next slide,
5 please.

6
7 Here's the proposed development overview.
8 We're proposing a new 8-story mixed use residential
9 and community facility development that will have
10 approximately 86,000 square feet of residential floor
11 area, 167 senior affordable housing units that's
12 intended to be financed through HPD's SARA term
13 sheet, a new and improved house of worship and
14 community center for the Casa de la Fe Church which
15 will be approximately 12,000 square feet, and 16
16 accessory parking spaces. Next slide, please.

17 We're requesting 2 zoning and land use
18 actions, a zoning map amendment from the existing
19 R4A/C1-2 and R5/C1-2 zoning districts to an R6/C1-2
20 zoning district and a zoning text amendment to
21 establish a Mandatory Inclusionary Housing project
22 area over the project area. Next slide, please.

23 Just an image of the site plan. Next
24 slide, please.

1 This is a new rendering of the mixed-use
2
3 development with the Casa de la Fe on the corner of
4 Beach and Randall Avenue. Next slide, please.

5 I now will turn it over to Leon to get
6 into more of the specifics regarding the senior
7 affordable housing component of the project.

8 LEON HUVSEPIAN: Thank you, Jackie.
9 Vertical Community Development is looking forward to
10 continuing its relationship and partnership with Casa
11 de la Fe Church to redevelop the property and bring
12 much needed senior affordable housing to the Bronx
13 and more specifically to the Soundview community. The
14 proposed rezoning will facilitate the development of
15 approximately 167 units of housing, 100 percent
16 affordable, for seniors of which 25 to 30 percent
17 will be permanently affordable under the Mandatory
18 Inclusionary Housing Program and all of which will be
19 subject to an HPD regulatory agreement with the term
20 of 30 years at a minimum, potentially up to 60 years.
21 We anticipate that the project will be funded using
22 the SARA program as mentioned, which is designed for
23 seniors 62 years and older. SARA permits a maximum
24 income level of 60 percent area median income but
25 also permits federal vouchers which are restricted to

1 50 percent area median income. Based on the 2022 HUD
2 income limits, household incomes must be between 0
3 and 53,400 for up to a 2-person household to qualify
4 for a unit. The SARA term sheet also provides for a
5 mix of studio and 1-bedroom units. This slide shows
6 the current unit distribution for the project based
7 on HPD's current term sheet. The SARA term sheet
8 provides for 30 percent of the units to be used for
9 homeless and formerly homeless individuals utilizing
10 some of the studio units. We will continue our
11 conversation with our partners at HPD regarding the
12 proposed unit distribution for the project and to
13 further explore whether changes are needed. With
14 that, back to Jackie.

16 JACLYN SCARINCI: Just to kind of give an
17 overview. The project received approval at the
18 Community Board and the Borough President and also
19 received approval from the City Planning Commission
20 and now we're here before the Zoning and Franchises
21 Subcommittee. If you have any questions, we're happy
22 to answer them. Thank you for your time.

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Just 2
24 questions really quick and I'll see if my Colleagues

2 have any questions. I just want to announce we've
3 been joined by Council Member Caban as well.

4 How long is the term for the regulatory
5 agreement for the affordable units that will be
6 covered in the SARA term sheet and are not subjected
7 to the MIH and what will be expected when the term
8 expires?

9 JACLYN SCARINCI: Sure. The SARA program
10 will require a minimum of a 30-year regulatory
11 agreement, but the tax exemption usually is a longer
12 period. It's a 60-year period.

13 LEON HUVSEPIAN: Minimum of 40 and usually
14 60 years depending on which tax exemption is used. So
15 a minimum of 60 years, a portion of that obviously is
16 affordable with the MIH. Most frequently, those get
17 rolled into new regulatory agreement, rehab, and a
18 new regulatory agreement after that period of time,
19 but that's beyond our horizon to see.

20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Borough
21 President Gibson has discussed the need for larger
22 unit sizes. Can you discuss what factors your team
23 contemplated when deciding both on the unit mix and
24 the square footage for each unit?

2 LEON HUVSEPIAN: There are a lot of
3 considerations obviously, and my background is HPD so
4 I worked there for 7 years previous to coming to
5 Vertical Community Development so one of the goals is
6 obviously to create as much affordable housing as
7 possible. One of the restrictions in the term sheet
8 limits unit sizes to be within a band so we're
9 designing our units to be term sheet compliant which
10 we have to do based on HPD's requirements, and that
11 enables more units to be created. We have a mix of
12 studios and 1-bedrooms that are permitted, and we do
13 have more studios currently, but that's really to get
14 as many units and provide for as many households as
15 possible.

16 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. I now
17 invite my Colleagues to ask any questions. Anybody
18 have any questions?

19 There being no questions for this
20 applicant panel, this panel is excused.

21 Counsel, are there any members of the
22 public who wish to testify on the 1810 Randall Avenue
23 proposal?

24

25

2 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chair, we will just
3 check with our remote production team to make sure
4 that there are no remote witnesses.

5 If there any members of the public who
6 wish to testify remotely on the 1810 Randall Avenue
7 proposal, please use the raise hand button now, and
8 if there are any persons in the Committee Room who
9 wish to testify on this item please come forward,
10 fill out a speaker card, and make yourself known. We
11 will stand at ease briefly while we check for remote
12 witnesses.

13 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: There be no other
14 members of the public who wish to testify on
15 Preconsidered LUs related to the ULURP C 220203 ZMX
16 and the N 220204 ZRX related to the 1810 Randall
17 Avenue rezoning proposal, the public hearing is now
18 closed.

19 Thank you, Counsel. Today, we will vote
20 to approve Preconsidered LUs related to ULURP numbers
21 C 220203 ZMX and N 220204 ZRX relating to the 1810
22 Randall Avenue rezoning proposal in Council Member
23 Farias' district in the Bronx. As we just heard, the
24 proposal will rezone the R4/C1-2 and an R5/C1-2
25 zoning district to an R6/C1-2 zoning district and

2 establish an MIH program area utilizing MIH Option 1
3 and 2. These approvals would facilitate the
4 development of a new 8-story mixed-use building with
5 upgraded facilities for Casa de la Fe. Council Member
6 Farias is in support of this proposal. Are there any
7 Council Members who have questions or remarks at this
8 time?

9 There being no Council Members, I will
10 now call for a vote to approve Preconsidered LUs
11 relating to ULURPs number C 220203 ZMX and N 220204
12 ZRX relating to the 1810 Randall Avenue rezoning
13 proposal.

14 Counsel, please call the roll.

15 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chair Riley.

16 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Aye.

17 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member
18 Moya.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: I vote aye.

20 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member
21 Louis.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: I vote aye.

23 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member
24 Abreu.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: Aye.

1 SUBCOMMITTEE ON ZONING AND FRANCHISES 18

2 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member
3 Bottcher.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: Aye.

5 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member
6 Hanks.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Aye.

8 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member
9 Carr.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Aye.

11 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: By a vote of 7 in
12 the affirmative, 0 in the negative, and no
13 abstentions, the items are approved and referred to
14 the full Land Use Committee.

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Counsel. To
16 continue with today's meeting, I will now open the
17 public hearing on Preconsidered LUs relating to the
18 ULURP C 220171 ZMX relating to the 1959 Strang Avenue
19 rezoning proposal in my district in the Bronx. This
20 application seeks a zoning map amendment to map a C2-
21 3 overlay within an existing R4 district.

22 For anyone wishing to testify on this
23 item remotely, if you have not already done so you
24 must register online and you may do that now by

25

2 visiting the Council's website at
3 council.nyc.gov/landuse.

4 Counsel, please call the first panel for
5 this item.

6 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: The applicant panel
7 for this item will include Mr. Eric Palatnik. Mr.
8 Palatnik, please raise your right hand.

9 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
10 whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your
11 testimony before the Subcommittee and in answer to
12 all Council Member questions?

13 ERIC PALATNIK: I do.

14 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. For the
16 viewing public, if you need an accessible version of
17 this presentation, please send an email request to
18 landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov.

19 Now the applicant team may begin.
20 Panelists, as you begin, I'll just ask you to please
21 restate your name and organization for the record.
22 You may begin.

23 ERIC PALATNIK: My name is Eric Palatnik,
24 and I'm representing 1959 Strang Avenue, Wharton
25 Properties, and I would like to thank all of you for

2 bringing back in-person meetings, I would not like to
3 thank you for bringing back a mask, and I'd like to
4 thank you for doing away with ties.

5 Now that I've said all of that, I'd like
6 to introduce this application, which I don't know if
7 you can see on the screen or if you have a copy of
8 it. It's in Council Member Riley's district. It's a
9 very small rezoning application in a R4 district to
10 allow a commercial overlay to extend from the
11 shopping center that you see in the foreground there
12 to the site. The site has been improved upon with a
13 diner for the better part of the last 75 years.
14 Council Member Riley, I think, knows it very well. It
15 sat dormant for the past decade. It was operating
16 under a BSA variance. The BSA refused to reinstate
17 the variance 6 years ago when we asked them and
18 forced us to come for a rezoning. If you want to
19 understand how things worked in New York City for the
20 past 5 years, that's why it's taken us 5 years to get
21 here. They could've acted on it relatively quickly,
22 but we were forced to come through a rezoning. We're
23 here now for the rezoning, and we have the unanimous
24 support of Community Board 11. We've worked with them
25 for the past few years, and they support it

2 unanimously as well as Borough President Vanessa
3 Gibson. Having said that, I'd ask whoever is
4 controlling the screen if you could just click to a
5 picture of the site and folks who are taking a look
6 at it online can see the property. It's an existing
7 diner in an R4 district. If you can click forward a
8 few slides, we can go to some pictures. You can pause
9 there. This is a picture of what it will look like,
10 and I hope Council Member Riley is happy with it. It
11 looks much better than what it looks like right now.
12 It has a signed lease for Bank of America in one of
13 the retail spaces. The other space is vacant and not
14 yet tenanted, but we are actively pursuing tenants
15 and we've made a commitment to the community that we
16 will not allow shmutz to come into the space. That's
17 a zoning term, a Yiddish zoning term, for nothing
18 (INAUDIBLE) or not desirable by the community. They
19 wanted to see a high-quality tenant in place here.
20 They did not want to see vape shops, and we have made
21 a commitment to them that we will find a high-quality
22 tenant. You will not see a laundromat, not that
23 there's anything wrong with it, nor will you see a
24 vape shop but we'll try to find uses and we made the
25 commitment to you. It'll be well-landscaped. We've

2 also designed it around the bus stop, which in the
3 image there is on the left side of the front of the
4 building and the parking lot wraps around the rear.

5 It's a very straightforward application. I don't know
6 if I need to go much further on the presentation
7 unless anybody would like to hear anything or see
8 anything specific. Thank you for your time.

9 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Eric. I'm
10 very pleased that this application is going through.
11 This has been an eyesore in the district for over a
12 decade, you can imagine, and also you're addressing
13 the banking issue that we have in the area. A lot of
14 the banks, which has happened in a lot of communities
15 of color, they're like picking up and going, and the
16 fact that you guys already made an investment and
17 have Bank of America coming to the community, I think
18 that's really great and I know Community Board 12 is
19 really appreciative of it.

20 I just have a few questions. Given the
21 need for more housing citywide, can your team explain
22 why you did not seek a rezoning which could increase
23 housing density while proposing this commercial
24 overlay?

2 ERIC PALATNIK: Nobody ever suggested that
3 to us before that they might want to see more housing
4 over there so I think that's the main reason, and
5 when we started bringing the application years ago,
6 because of the way that it came about, it really was
7 focused on a commercial component to it. I wish we
8 would've spoken to you a few years ago and got that
9 idea in our head because we probably would've pursued
10 that.

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Does your team have
12 commercial tenants picked out for the new space? What
13 type of commercial use does your team envision at
14 this site? How will these services benefit the
15 surrounding community?

16 ERIC PALATNIK: As we've just spoken
17 about, I think you've made it quite clear that the
18 bank is of value to the community and something that
19 you'd like to see in the area. Also, I made mentioned
20 that the Community Board, and I apologize, I
21 mentioned Community Board 11, it's Community Board
22 12, you corrected me, asked for us to have a high-
23 quality tenant in the remaining space, and we're
24 going to endeavor to do that and try to find a use
25 there that everybody could be proud of.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Eric, speaking of the
3 second space, would the applicant be willing to work
4 with me and the community to seek a needed community
5 service provider for the second commercial space like
6 a small daycare or a community organization that will
7 benefit...

8 ERIC PALATNIK: Bring it on. It's post-
9 COVID retail space. We're happy to see any use that
10 you feel is important that you want to bring to us
11 we'd love to meet with you about and introduce to the
12 owners.

13 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Is there a
14 commitment to beautifying the sidewalk area on this
15 lot with street trees or the urban design elements?

16 ERIC PALATNIK: Yes. As a requirement to
17 the Builders' Pavement Plan, there will be a
18 requirement to plant street trees. There are design
19 guidelines based upon the location of the bus stop.
20 We cannot impede upon the waiting area for the bus
21 stop, but we will be planting street trees.

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Eric.
23 That's all the questions I have. I now invite my
24 Colleagues to ask any questions that they have.

2 There being no further questions for this
3 applicant panel, this panel is excused.

4 ERIC PALATNIK: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Counsel, are there any
6 members of the public who wish to testify on 1959
7 Strang Avenue proposal remotely or in person?

8 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Once again, if
9 there are any members of the public in the Committee
10 Room who wish to testify on this item, please make
11 yourselves known and present a speaker card.

12 Mr. Chair, no members of the public in
13 the room, and we have no members of the public
14 testifying remotely.

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Counsel.
16 There being no members of the public who wish to
17 testify on the Preconsidered LUs relating to the
18 ULURP number C 220171 ZMX relating to the 1959 Strang
19 Avenue rezoning proposal, the public hearing is now
20 closed and the item is laid over.

21 To continue with today's meeting, I will
22 now open the public hearing on Preconsidered LUs
23 relating to the ULURP number C 210394 ZMQ relating to
24 the 231-06 Northern Boulevard rezoning proposal in
25 Council Member Paladino's district in Queens. This

2 application seeks a zoning map amendment to map a C2-
3 2 overlay within an existing R1-2 zoning district.

4 For anyone wishing to testify on this
5 item remotely, if you have not already done so, you
6 must register online and you may do that now by
7 visiting the Council's website at
8 council.nyc.gov/landuse.

9 Counsel, please call the first panel for
10 this item.

11 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: The applicant panel
12 for this item will include Frank St. Jacques. Mr. St.
13 Jacques, please raise your right hand.

14 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
15 whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your
16 testimony before the Subcommittee and in answer to
17 all Council Member questions?

18 FRANK ST. JACQUES: Yes.

19 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. For the
21 viewing public, if you need an accessible version of
22 this presentation, please send an email request to
23 landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov.

24 Now, the applicant team may begin.
25 Panelists, as you begin, I'll just ask that you

2 please restate your name and organization for the
3 record. You may begin.

4 FRANK ST. JACQUES: Thank you, Chair
5 Riley. Next slide, please.

6 Good afternoon, Chair Riley and
7 Subcommittee Members. I'm Frank St. Jacques with
8 Akerman, LLP. We're Land Use Counsel on the zoning
9 map amendment to establish a C2-2 commercial overlay
10 within the existing R1-1 district on a portion of
11 Northern Boulevard in Queens Community District 11.
12 We represent the applicant property owner who
13 operates the Mizumi Restaurant that is within the
14 rezoning area. The proposed commercial overlay would
15 allow commercial use subject to the use, bulk, and
16 parking regulations of the zoning resolution, and it
17 would facilitate the enlargement of Mizumi
18 Restaurant, which is a family-owned,
19 multigenerational small business that has served the
20 community since about 2010. Next slide, please.

21 The proposed rezoning area is outlined in
22 yellow on this map and was zoned R1-2 for residential
23 use back in 1961. However, there is no residential
24 use, only commercial use, within the proposed
25 rezoning area. The Mizumi site, on the lefthand side

2 of the proposed rezoning area, is outlined in red.

3 Next slide, please.

4 All of the properties in the rezoning
5 area as well as some to the north and east are
6 commercial uses which were permitted by use variances
7 from the Board of Standards and Appeals, or BSA, over
8 several decades because the R1-2 residential district
9 does not allow commercial use as of right. Next
10 slide, please.

11 This slide shows the existing site
12 conditions. The site, itself, in total is about
13 69,000 square feet. As we noted, it was zoned R1-2
14 back in 1961, and there's been restaurant use at the
15 site since around 1976 by BSA variance. Mizumi began
16 operating in 2010 after receiving a new BSA variance
17 approval, and they seek to expand into the
18 approximately 19,000 square foot vacant portion of
19 the site which is shown in the diagram on the
20 lefthand side of the slide that was previously used
21 as a gas station. Next slide, please.

22 This zoning change map shows the existing
23 R1-2 zoning district on the left and the proposed C2-
24 2 commercial overlay with the R1-2 underlying zoning
25 remaining in place shown on the right. The proposed

2 overlay affects the Mizumi site and 4 other
3 properties to the east as outlined on the zoning
4 change map. Next slide, please.

5 To provide some context for the proposed
6 commercial overlay, this map shows that there are
7 commercial overlays along nearly all of Northern
8 Boulevard at the eastern edge of Community District
9 11. The area where there's not commercial overlays is
10 almost entirely commercial by way of 9 variances that
11 are shown here with red dots including all the
12 properties in the rezoning area and several others to
13 the north and east. The goal of this application is
14 to bring the zoning in line with the existing
15 conditions on this strip of Northern Boulevard. Next
16 slide, please.

17 The proposed overlay represents cohesive
18 planning to address this strip of nonconforming
19 commercial uses. We'll note that the high parking
20 requirement in the C2-2 overlay of 1 space per 300
21 square feet of floor area effectively limits the
22 ability to fully utilize the available commercial
23 FAR. Also note that multifamily and hotel uses are
24 not permitted as the existing R1-2 zoning remains in
25 place. Next slide, please.

1 The proposed enlargement is shown here on
2 the right next to the existing building on the left.
3 The building is raised to comply with flood
4 resiliency requirements pursuant to the Building Code
5 and provide additional parking. The site will also
6 have extensive stormwater management per a New York
7 State Department of Environmental Conservation
8 Wetlands Permit. Next slide, please.

9 Finally, we acknowledge Community Board
10 11's concerns with this application but submit that
11 several of their concerns are not triggered by this
12 project and that the proposed commercial overlay will
13 ultimately benefit the community with comprehensive
14 zoning versus the current patchwork of BSA variances.
15 The rezoning provides certainty and encourages
16 investment, allows property owners to obtain
17 financing when they don't have to return to the BSA
18 for extensions of the existing use variances. We also
19 note that this rezoning is in line with the
20 community's own 197-A plan which sought to allow
21 commercial development on this strip of Northern
22 Boulevard by adding an overlay while retaining the
23 low-density R1-2 residential zoning. This is exactly
24 what we're asking the Council to consider today.
25

1 With that, I'll close the presentation,
2 and we're happy to answer any questions. Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. I have a
4 couple of questions for this applicant team. What led
5 you to conclude that the BSA variance was unlikely to
6 be granted for the proposed project?

7 FRANK ST. JACQUES: As you noted, the
8 Mizumi originally pursued a BSA variance for the same
9 enlargement that's presented here today. The
10 Community Board recommended approval of that
11 enlargement by variance, but, after years of
12 submissions to the BSA and hearing, we received
13 indication from the BSA that they were unlikely that
14 a variance would be granted and Mizumi withdrew that
15 application and sought the rezoning.

16 Despite whatever community support Mizumi
17 may have had then and now, BSA variances are an
18 extremely difficult process. They're subject to 5
19 findings that require extensive support with
20 different professionals, economic analysis,
21 environmental analysis so after many years of
22 pursuing the BSA variance and receiving that
23 indication that it was unlikely to be approved,
24

2 that's when Mizumi determined that they would move
3 forward with a rezoning rather than a BSA variance.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. What will
5 most likely happen to the development site and other
6 vacant sites in the rezoning area if this application
7 were to be disapproved?

8 FRANK ST. JACQUES: Were to be
9 disapproved?

10 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, correct.

11 FRANK ST. JACQUES: Well, I think the
12 status quo would remain. The existing vacant parcel
13 that's a part of the development site that was a
14 former gas station, no development really could occur
15 there although the site is zoned for R1-2 residential
16 use. R1-2 is an extremely low-density residential
17 district that only allows single family homes, so
18 detached homes. It's also the site that previously
19 had a gas station on it so there was previously
20 extensive contamination. Mizumi has performed a
21 significant amount of cleanup there, but the current
22 Department of Environmental Conservation spill that's
23 been opened in connection with the gas station site,
24 the cleanup there, could not be closed and
25 essentially nothing would happen. This is similar for

2 the other sites within the proposed rezoning area.
3 Essentially, the zoning is such that the R1-2 zoning
4 is in such contrast with what's actually there at all
5 these sites that nothing can occur without further
6 discretionary action.

7 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Can you describe the
8 design features of the proposed development that
9 would address environmental concerns about the
10 stormwater runoff and the flood resiliency,
11 especially the expanded parking lot?

12 FRANK ST. JACQUES: Sure. I'll take a step
13 back and not that this strip of Northern Boulevard is
14 adjacent to Alley Pond Park which is a protected
15 wetland area. None of the property is actually within
16 the wetland area, but it's close enough to it that it
17 necessitates oversight and ultimately permitting by
18 State DEC. As part of any development on the Mizumi,
19 requires a Wetlands Permit. In the context of the BSA
20 variance, Mizumi went ahead and got that wetlands
21 permit and designed a really significant stormwater
22 retention system that includes about a 140,000 gallon
23 detention tank that's underneath the parking lot as
24 well as bioretention planters. The former gas station
25 part of the site is capped to avoid any contamination

2 into Alley Pond Park, but any stormwater is captured
3 in bioretention planters and ultimately detained and
4 then cleaned and recharged into the groundwater via
5 very extensive stormwater controls.

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Have you
7 considered any revisions to the planned development
8 in response to the community concerns?

9 FRANK ST. JACQUES: We have considered
10 certain changes to the programming of the proposed
11 enlargement, potentially with a reduction of floor
12 area, but we're still working on what potentially
13 would be amenable to the community and the local
14 Council Member. That's an ongoing discussion, and we
15 hope ultimately to earn the Council Member's support
16 through some change to the proposed project.

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. I now
18 invite my Colleagues to ask any questions.

19 There being no questions for this
20 applicant panel, this panel is excused. Thank you so
21 much.

22 FRANK ST. JACQUES: Thank you, Chair.

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Counsel, are there any
24 members of the public who wish to testify on 231-06
25 Northern Boulevard proposal?

2 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Is Kenneth Chiang
3 available to testify remotely?

4 KENNETH CHIANG: Yes. My name is Kenneth
5 Chiang. I'm with my father at work. We are the owners
6 and applicants of Mizumi Restaurant and rezoning
7 application. We have been in business, I'm the 3rd
8 generation restaurateur. My father has been a
9 restaurateur, his father has been a restaurateur,
10 and we plan to continue to serve our community that
11 we're in, and I believe it's a modest request for us
12 to expand. We've struggled during the pandemic. There
13 were a lot of restrictions. I think this is an
14 opportunity for us as a business and as members of
15 the community to improve the site and continue to
16 serve the community that we've been serving and
17 supporting for all these years and hopefully the
18 years to come. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Mr. Chiang.
20 Can you just clarify? Did you say that you guys are
21 the owners?

22 KENNETH CHIANG: Correct.

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you.

24 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: All right, we'll
25 just check with our remote production team to make

2 sure, we have one additional witness participating
3 remotely. Once again, for anyone here with us today
4 wishing to testify, please see a Sergeant-at-Arms and
5 fill out a speaker card.

6 The next witness in this hearing will be
7 Tom Gresch.

8 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

9 THOMAS GRESCH: Good afternoon. Can you
10 folks hear me?

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you,
12 Tom. Tom.

13 THOMAS GRESCH: Hi. Can you folks hear me?

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you
15 now. Go ahead.

16 THOMAS GRESCH: Thank you very much. I
17 appreciate and I'm honored to be able to make a
18 statement to the Subcommittee on Zoning and
19 Franchises regarding the project Mizumi on Northern
20 Boulevard. The Queens Chamber of Commerce
21 wholeheartedly endorses this change due to the fact,
22 as this borough enters a post-pandemic mode, we need
23 all the small businesses and all the jobs we can
24 muster. Again, the Queens Chamber of Commerce
25 wholeheartedly supports this effort to support the

2 restaurant on Northern Boulevard. I yield my time to
3 anybody else who wants to speak. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. There being
5 no other members of the public who wish to testify on
6 Preconsidered LUs relating to ULURP number C 210394
7 ZMQ relating to the 231-06 Northern Boulevard
8 rezoning proposal, the public hearing is now closed
9 and the items are laid over.

10 I will now open the public hearing on
11 Preconsidered LUs relating to ULURP number C 220196
12 ZMQ and N 220197 ZRQ relating to the Halletts North
13 rezoning proposal in Council Member Caban's district
14 in Queens. This application seeks a zoning map
15 amendment to rezone an existing M1-1 zoning district
16 to an R7-3/C2-4 zoning district and the related
17 zoning text amendment to establish a MIH program area
18 to facilitate a mixed-use development with 1,400
19 units of housing.

20 For anyone wishing to testify on this
21 item remotely, if you have not already done so you
22 must register online and you may do that now by
23 visiting the Council's website at
24 council.nyc.gov/landuse.

2 I will now like to allow Council Member
3 Caban to give any remarks regarding this project.
4 Council Member Caban.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CABAN: Thank you, Chair
6 Riley, and thank you for holding this important
7 hearing. I'm excited that we're finally at the
8 Council review stage for the Hallett's North project
9 in my district. This project has been around for many
10 years, and I'm grateful to the constituents and
11 community leaders who participated in the many
12 scoping sessions and public meetings through the
13 years and to the applicant for making a number of
14 adjustments along the way.

15 I want to start at the outset by saying
16 that I have been and will continue be critical of
17 using developer-driving MIH rezonings as our only
18 affordable housing creation strategy. In
19 neighborhoods like Astoria, we have outsourced the
20 responsibility of building affordable units almost
21 entirely to the private sector and yet wonder why
22 folks have such strong skepticism around development
23 generally and rezoning specifically. If signing off
24 on MIH projects is all New Yorkers see us doing to
25 solve the affordable housing crisis in our city, then

2 we've really failed. It's the city, state, and
3 federal government's job to develop new tools to
4 build and preserve low-income housing and fight
5 against displacement. Mandatory Inclusionary Housing
6 is one such too, but it is not by a longshot
7 sufficient to address our city's crisis. MIH is an
8 important way to ensure that private development
9 contributes to community needs, but for-profit
10 development will never produce the scale or quality
11 of housing that our lowest income neighbors need and
12 deserve, and the city must pursue additional tools
13 and strategies, comprehensive planning, ensuring that
14 new housing and affordable housing is fairly
15 distributed throughout the city, a citywide land
16 bank, a new shared equity homeownership program, and
17 put real funding behind them. I was really distressed
18 that in the FY-23 adopted budget that it cut our
19 housing budget, and, by recent reports, that HPD
20 lacks the staff resources to accelerate new
21 production and preservation of affordable housing,
22 especially at a time of such instability. Even as we
23 fight for the creation of new tools and strategies,
24 some like comprehensive planning that will take many
25 years to develop, I think it would be irresponsible

1 to not utilize the tools we do have now. So in spite
2 of the limitations inherent in the city's land use
3 process, I've engaged in this process and evaluated
4 the project alongside my constituents, eager to
5 answer the following questions:

7 Given the project's proximity to NYCHA
8 housing, can we maximize the number of units at deep
9 affordability levels so that my neighbors in public
10 housing can live there?

11 Will the waterfront access be truly
12 public, welcoming, and without unnecessary and unjust
13 surveillance?

14 Does the peninsula have the
15 infrastructure needed to support these changes?

16 It's important to note that the Hallett's
17 Peninsula has not been an active, working waterfront
18 for a long time, and, absent any zoning changes, the
19 land would've remained underutilized and polluted.

20 Previous administrations and City Councils have
21 already approved over 4,000 units of future housing
22 on the Hallett's Peninsula along with new waterfront
23 access designs, commercial space, schools, and
24 community facilities so this project before us, when
25 evaluated alongside what's already been approved on

2 the Peninsula, certainly fits within that vision but
3 concerns around affordability and infrastructure
4 remain, and I'm looking forward to digging in on
5 those details today. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Council
7 Member Caban.

8 Counsel, please call the first panel for
9 this item.

10 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: The applicant panel
11 for this item will include Rob Huberman, Jay Valgora,
12 Ken Smith joining us in the room and joining remotely
13 Jason Diaz.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Counsel, please
15 administer the affirmation.

16 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: I'll ask each of
17 you in turn including Jason Diaz to answer the
18 following. Please raise your right hands.

19 Do you swear or affirm that the testimony
20 you're about to give will be the truth, the whole
21 truth, and nothing but the truth and that you will
22 answer all Council Member questions truthfully. Mr.
23 Huberman.

24 ROBERT HUBERMAN: I do.

25 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Mr. Valgora.

2 JAY VALGORA: Yes.

3 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Ken Smith.

4 KEN SMITH: Yes.

5 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Jason Diaz.

6 JASON DIAZ: I do.

7 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. For the
9 viewing public, if you need an accessible version of
10 this presentation, please send an email request to
11 landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov.

12 Now the applicant panel may begin. Please
13 remember to restate your name and organization for
14 the record before you begin. You may begin.

15 ROBERT HUBERMAN: Robert Huberman. Good
16 afternoon, everybody. I'm here with my fellow
17 panelists... (INAUDIBLE)

18 We're here on behalf of the applicant for
19 the Halletts North project which is an exciting new
20 project that is proposed to be developed on the
21 Halletts Peninsula in Astoria Queens. Next slide,
22 please.

23 This is just a rendering facing south
24 southeast just so you could see, and it's from the
25 public open waterfront park that is proposed on the

2 development which we'll go into some detail in this
3 presentation. Next slide, please.

4 This is the consultant team that's been
5 working on this project diligently for the past 3+
6 years. Just wanted to acknowledge them. Next slide,
7 please.

8 Okay. Hopefully you guys can see that,
9 but, if not, there is significant community support
10 for this project, and that is due to the project
11 goals and the community benefits that are going to go
12 hand-in-hand with the development. One of the first
13 project goals and community benefits will be
14 resiliency. There's going to be major enhancements to
15 resiliency here. We're going to raise the site 9 feet
16 which is more than is required, and that will prevent
17 coastal flooding, not only on the site but also in
18 the surrounding community because it's been lifted up
19 so much and Jay can get into that a little later. In
20 terms of sustainability, the applicant is seeking
21 LEED Silver Certification for the building, and
22 they're looking into geothermal energy which we'll
23 also get into a little bit later which should help
24 reduce reliance on fossil fuel use. One of the
25 biggest assets to this project is the public space

1 which Ken Smith and his team have designed. It's
2 going to be a beautiful space. It's going to be about
3 1.1 acres which is about 30 percent more than is
4 required under zoning. It will be open to the public.
5 It's going to be a beautiful waterfront park. Aside
6 from what we're saying, the applicant is entering
7 into a restrictive declaration and a maintenance
8 agreement with the Parks Department which ensure that
9 the park will be maintained and will be open to the
10 public. The next biggest asset that we're providing
11 is about 335 affordable units so the applicant is
12 pursuing MIH Option 1 here. They have since the
13 beginning of the project, and there will be no
14 subsidies being sought from HPD so that should help
15 expedite things so 335 units is going to be great for
16 the local community. Finally, economic opportunity
17 and education, we're looking at about 500 jobs that
18 are going to be created. The applicant is partnered
19 with Zone 126 and Urban Upbound. There's about 20,000
20 square feet of community facility space that has been
21 allocated to this development so we've been working
22 very closely with them to help find them a space for
23 their programming. There's also a healthcare provider
24 that we've been speaking with, and that would all go
25

1 into the community facility space as well. Next
2 slide, please.

3
4 There's been significant community
5 engagement and outreach even before this application
6 was submitted. Over 3 years of community engagement
7 including 4 meetings with the Community Board,
8 meetings with the Astoria Houses Tenant Association.
9 There were focus groups with Astoria Houses
10 residents. There's been a lot. What's at the bottom
11 of this slide we believe rings true. We have made
12 what we have heard a priority. It's really been a
13 very collegiate, cooperative process all throughout.
14 Because of that, we're happy to report that we've
15 received Community Board approval, Borough President
16 approval with some conditions, and most recently City
17 Planning Commission approval for this project. I
18 think that's in no small part due to the amount of
19 engagement that there has been on this project. Next
20 slide, please.

21 Now, I'm just going to quickly run
22 through the proposed zoning actions. It's what we're
23 here for today. These are what we're seeking approval
24 on. This is a rezoning. It's a rezoning from a M1-1
25 manufacturing district to an R7-3/C2-4. With the R7-

3/C2-4 zoning comes the next bullet which is the zoning text amendment to map an MIH Option 1 area here. Next is a Waterfront Special Permit which will waive certain heights, setback, tower size regulations. This is directly connected to not only the design of the building but also the design of the waterfront plaza, the waterfront open area, and the limited and narrow layout of the site itself. It's kind of a flag-shaped lot so certain waivers were required for that. The next 3 really kind of go together, waterfront authorizations to help modify little bits and pieces of the waterfront area using boulders instead of bollards and things like that, little grass area modifications, things like that, and waterfront authorization for phase development so the waterfront will be developed in phases because the project is so large, but the vast majority of the waterfront will be developed in the first phase, a waterfront certification, which is always required whenever you're building something on the waterfront from City Planning, and an amendment to the city map to de-map a portion of 3rd Street extending from 26th Avenue. Currently, 3rd Street is a mapped street. It's privately owned, and it's unimproved. It's

2 basically just dirt and maybe little bits of grass,
3 and through this project we're going to de-map the
4 street and it will become an upland connection from
5 26th Avenue to the waterfront, and it will allow the
6 public access to the waterfront. Next slide, and I'm
7 going to turn things over now to Jay Valgora.

8 JAY VALGORA: Thank you, Robert. My name
9 is Jay Valgora. I'm the Founder and Principal of
10 Studio V Architecture. I'll be presenting this, and
11 Ken Smith I think will jump in with me because we've
12 worked together on this project.

13 I want to say it's been a privilege for
14 me to have had the opportunity to do my best to work
15 with this community for over 16 years. I don't
16 pretend to have the depth of knowledge of our Council
17 Member or other people, but we've tried hard to
18 engage this community and some of the other projects
19 and benefits raised including parks and schools.
20 We're proud that we had our small role in helping
21 advocate for that, and we look forward to the input
22 of the Council as we see how we can help make this
23 project the best that it could be. Next slide.

24 We'll take you into the design briefly.
25 Here you can see the site. It's on the northern side

2 of the Hallett's Peninsula so you can see it's this
3 kind of L-shaped site at 3rd Street and 26th Avenue,
4 and you can see that it's really kind of separate
5 from much of the surrounding neighborhood and yet
6 very much a part also of the Astoria Houses campus
7 and it occupies a prominent position on the
8 waterfront. Next.

9 This shows what to me is one of the most
10 important things which is this has the opportunity to
11 create one of the great missing links to really
12 fulfil that and correct one of the missing links in
13 the entire Astoria waterfront. We've advocated
14 tirelessly in order to add additional open space and
15 green space on the waterfront, and the Halletts North
16 development will be one of the last pieces in what
17 could be a 2.5-mile continuous green waterfront all
18 the way from Rainey Park to Astoria Park. There is
19 one missing link next to it which is the Visa site
20 which we've advocated for but that one's not yet
21 coming forward so it's a significant connection in
22 the overall public realm. Next.

23 This is kind of a view and plan of the
24 community mostly as it is today so you can see how
25 the waterfront was mostly underutilized industrial

2 spaces as the Councilwoman said as well as the NYCHA
3 campus which actually exists on the southern portion,
4 and how we're really working to try to integrate all
5 of the upland and the perimeter and really create an
6 entire community that's connected to its waterfront.

7 In the next slide, you can see how it
8 actually shows with the other projects that have been
9 previously approved, Halletts Point to the left,
10 Astoria Cove to the upper right, certain projects
11 with improvements such as public schools and
12 affordable housing within the overall NYCHA campus.
13 Next.

14 The Halletts North piece is a significant
15 addition to that and really working to try to meet
16 the needs of the community and knit together a
17 sequence of public spaces, housing, streets,
18 connectivity, and so forth. We'd like to take you
19 into the detailed design and show you how it fits
20 into this larger community but how also specifically
21 we've tried to create the best possible design here.
22 Next.

23 Here's a presentation on the building and
24 landscape design, and we'll kind of just jump in.
25 Ken, if you want to introduce yourself.

2 KEN SMITH: I'm Ken Smith. I'm the
3 Landscape Architect on the project.

4 JAY VALGORA: Next slide. This is an
5 overall view, and again I'm just going to recap
6 because I know Rob mentioned some of the overall
7 facts so just to kind of put them out there. Here you
8 can see an ariel perspective showing its relationship
9 really on the entire peninsula as well as the East
10 River. It's really a very significant site. You can
11 see how it kind of fits into the overall character
12 and scale of the other proposed developments, but
13 then we're going to take you into the special details
14 of this one. Overall, the total floor area ratio
15 requested is a 6.0. The total zoning floor area is
16 approximately just under a million square feet, about
17 986,000. The retail area is relatively small because
18 it's only a small portion suitable for retail but a
19 couple thousand square feet. Residential area is the
20 majority so it's mostly housing, 960. We're looking
21 at present that the total number of units is around
22 1,337, could vary slightly, and the affordable units
23 about 335, and then there would be space for 510
24 parking spaces so that's kind of a larger overview of
25 the project (INAUDIBLE). Next.

2 Here you can see we worked really
3 carefully with our colleagues at City Planning and
4 also through extensive community meetings which I
5 like to do personally as the owner of my firm to
6 really try to sculpt the massing in order to create a
7 highly articulated series of building envelopes and
8 volumes that must be respected if the project is
9 approved which also include significant setbacks and
10 even input fairly far along into the process where
11 our client has really worked with us to make
12 commitments and improvements throughout including
13 these significant setbacks at 3rd Street and moving
14 the tower closest to the waterfront. Even though we
15 have 30 percent extra open space, we even pushed that
16 tower back a bit towards the end in order to respond
17 to input that we received from the Council and from
18 City Planning. Next.

19 Resiliency is a key point, and I'm proud
20 of how we address resiliency. I was actually
21 appointed by the City Council to the Waterfront
22 Management Advisory Board. I believe I'm the only
23 practicing architect in New York that had that honor
24 where we worked pro bono with the City to actually
25 help create the 10-year plan, and, as part of that, I

2 like to live by the principles that we promote and so
3 we've tried to take extraordinary measures to take
4 into account resiliency and climate change including
5 significant elevation to the site, but, more than
6 that, and I think it's key, we want to not only
7 protect our site, but we would like to make
8 improvements that benefit the greater community so
9 not only does the elevation prevent water from
10 entering deeper into the peninsula and the other
11 projects will also help but we would like to absorb
12 stormwater, create kind of a sponge or a series of
13 rain gardens that I know Ken will describe shortly
14 that actually really creates softer edges, reinforce
15 the waterfront, and actually allow us to collect and
16 hold stormwater so this is a very important part of
17 our strategy and very important for the future of our
18 waterfront. Next.

19 This starts to show some of the
20 stormwater collections. Ken, do you want to speak to
21 this a little bit too?

22 KEN SMITH: This shows sort of the major
23 parts of the project at 3rd Street which is the
24 upland corridor that links the waterfront to the
25 neighborhood, and we'll show you designs for that

2 which are really intended to be as welcoming and
3 accessible as possible. We've worked very hard to
4 actually wrap the waterfront to the south to actually
5 shorten the distance from the neighborhood to
6 increase its welcoming quality. We've also developed
7 a series of infiltration gardens, what we call the
8 oyster gardens, as well as active recreation.

9 JAY VALGORA: Next slide.

10 KEN SMITH: This shows the emphasis on
11 stormwater infiltration. The 2 major strategies are
12 to lift up the site to deal with storm surge to
13 protect the neighborhood and then to actually
14 infiltrate as much stormwater as possible to reduce
15 the runoff that would have an impact on the
16 neighborhood.

17 JAY VALGORA: You can see here too that
18 we're trying to really engage the street. For
19 example, this is the first thing one sees in the
20 development from the upland community so we wanted to
21 put retail, cafes, signify the welcomeness of the
22 waterfront, do riparian plantings, rock gardens while
23 still elevating the site in order to make it
24 friendly. We think those 2 things can be done in a
25 way that is compatible.

2 KEN SMITH: The stormwater infiltration
3 system is based on having infiltration gardens where
4 the drainage actually is directed inward to these
5 gardens where they will filter through the soil and
6 into infiltration chambers so we can actually handle
7 a great deal of stormwater on the site, and that's in
8 part due because we're raising the site up about 9
9 feet and so we have ample volume to work with for
10 stormwater.

11 JAY VALGORA: People often ask me are we
12 sort of by elevating our site pushing the water out
13 onto the surrounding properties, and, in fact, we're
14 very specifically not doing that. We're elevating the
15 site to take into account significant future climate
16 change. We're elevating it more than is required by
17 code and setting a higher standard than even what New
18 York City requires because we'd like to be an
19 exemplary waterfront project, but then we're also
20 acting as a sponge to kind of soak up as much of the
21 stormwater as we can from the surrounding community
22 in order to benefit the greater peninsula. Next.

23 KEN SMITH: I think beyond the
24 environmental goals we've tried to embed the site
25 with good social spaces and active recreation that

1 responds to the community. Certainly, the waterfront
2 will provide a good bike trail for people with
3 bicycle parking. We've worked with the Parks
4 Department to provide outdoor exercise equipment
5 because that part of the health and wellness part of
6 the project. Working with the Community Board, we're
7 putting in an overlook deck which actually projects
8 out over the slope and gets people closer to the
9 water, and it will be designed with picnic tables and
10 barbeque grills so it really would serve family
11 events and gatherings and group activities like that
12 as well as the social seating that is typical of
13 waterfronts.
14

15 JAY VALGORA: I'd only add that I'd like
16 to thank City Planning, the Department of Parks, the
17 local Community Board, the Councilwoman, and the City
18 Council office, their own planner, because we
19 received input from each of them at various stages so
20 we're presenting these as the ideas we've developed
21 but these really come from a whole series of
22 different people and we've had the privilege of being
23 able to include these elements within the design
24 through the process.
25

2 KEN SMITH: (INAUDIBLE) many of the best
3 ideas came from the Community Board and the Parks
4 Department and the neighborhood. We actually
5 incorporated them because they were the right thing
6 to do and they made a lot of sense.

7 JAY VALGORA: Let's keep going. We don't
8 want to take too much of your time. We want to answer
9 your questions too.

10 KEN SMITH: This is the overlook deck that
11 we've provided which provides a really great kind of
12 access to the water, looking out over the waterfront,
13 in terms of active recreation with the family
14 gathering, picnicking, and barbeque area.

15 JAY VALGORA: You can see how we've
16 elevated the site but still created soft edges, this
17 kind of wonderful feature that extends out which is
18 at a really special point, we'll show you renderings
19 later. You can see the oyster gardens and even these
20 kind of social spaces with these kind of green,
21 grassy amphitheaters. Next.

22 KEN SMITH: One of the challenges was
23 really to deal with 3rd Street, the access to the
24 waterfront, and we've heard very clearly and have
25 been responsive to making it as welcoming and

2 accessible, having equity involved in getting to the
3 waterfront so we've treated the street really a part
4 of the waterfront with a positive landscape. It feels
5 like the waterfront. We've actually shortened the
6 street up to wrap the waterfront around the corner of
7 the development and closer to the neighborhood.

8 JAY VALGORA: Furthermore, the mapped
9 street is only 50 feet and so we've convinced our
10 client to actually electively widen the street wider
11 than is required.

12 KEN SMITH: Actually, we widened the
13 sidewalks but not the street.

14 JAY VALGORA: That's right. Not the drive
15 aisle but the sidewalks, and you can see it
16 represented in this view where there are wider
17 sidewalks, extended tree pits, seating and benches
18 that encourage people to linger. They're actually
19 incorporated within the sidewalk area as well as
20 extensive what we call stoop gardens that activate
21 the edges of the building that have many entrances
22 with kind of small stoops and gardens that actually
23 represent I think the typologies that one sees in
24 Queens and in New York City. Next.

2 We're going to kind of work our way into
3 the waterfront.

4 KEN SMITH: This is really the waterfront
5 proper where it really begins to open up and you get
6 kind of the full effect of seeing the waterfront and
7 the bridges and the whole sound, if you will.

8 JAY VALGORA: The further in one comes,
9 the buildings peel back even further. We set them
10 back, we angled them to open up views, encourage
11 people to come to the waterfront, provided extensive
12 plantings, and I note that these are all required.
13 These aren't just illustrative. The exact plans, of
14 course, are vested with City Planning, if they're
15 approved and so literally every sidewalk, every rock,
16 every planted area must be built as shown here. Next
17 slide.

18 KEN SMITH: This slide shows how we've
19 actually wrapped the waterfront area around the
20 building corner toward the south to actually bring
21 the waterfront closer to 26th Avenue to shorten up
22 3rd Street to actually make the waterfront as close
23 and accessible and welcoming as possible.

24 JAY VALGORA: I worked directly with the
25 New York City Fire Department. We minimized the lanes

2 as Ken said to be just what is acceptable to the Fire
3 Department in order to ensure the safe access of
4 their staff and then really we've went to great
5 lengths including recent feedback to maximize the
6 amount of pedestrian area, greenery, the rock
7 gardens, really communicate the openness of the water
8 which we think has been essential and the direction
9 we've been given by the community. Next.

10 KEN SMITH: This then looks back toward
11 the neighborhood so you can see 3rd Street, you can
12 see the entrance to the waterfront, you can see the
13 terraced areas, the rain gardens, the diversity of
14 native plant materials.

15 JAY VALGORA: I was like Ken, what are the
16 red trees, and he's like those are tupelos that we're
17 mixing in with the other trees. We wanted a range of
18 different experiences. We wanted to have different
19 colors and different seasons. It's not just for the
20 warm weather so we want to really show how we can
21 make it as welcoming as possible. Next.

22 This is really a larger view so it shows
23 kind of the ensemble of all the buildings, all the
24 open spaces, the resiliency features, and, most
25 importantly, also how it connects to the surrounding

1 areas as I mentioned earlier because we're very much
2 about how can we connect into the historic
3 (INAUDIBLE) property next to it which can also,
4 designed with us, how can we create the continuity of
5 the waterfront where there's a whole range of
6 different experiences because over there we have
7 (INAUDIBLE) and a large playground but then we added
8 other elements such as the active recreation kind of
9 features within this property so we're really working
10 hard to look at it not just for this property but how
11 it ties to a greater extent into the surrounding
12 community and certainly the peninsula as a whole.
13
14 Next.

15 The one thing I would leave you with here
16 is just that there's also something a little bit
17 magical about this site. This is a place where the
18 waters of New York come together, where the Long
19 Island Sound meets the Harlem River meets the East
20 River. The views of the bridges. It's a very special
21 place, and so we'd like to create an astounding and
22 special public park that we think is commiserate with
23 the potential of this site and create something that
24 New Yorkers and the people of this community will
25

2 love going forward. It's very important to us for
3 this project, and we hope we've achieved that. Next.

4 Then I think we have just some of the
5 community benefits, and I'll let Rob speak to these
6 issues.

7 ROBERT HUBERMAN: Thank you, Jay. Thank
8 you, Ken. Next slide, please.

9 As Jay said, I'm just going to run
10 through probably the most important part of this
11 project which are the community benefits. The first
12 one is brownfield remediation. This was one of the
13 dirtiest sites in all the 5 boroughs, and in kind of
14 an interesting and good move that the applicant made,
15 they invested 16 million dollars in the cleanup which
16 has already been done, and they did this before they
17 even applied to the city for any type of approval so
18 they were very proactive about it. It shows how
19 serious they are about this site and getting these
20 things done.

21 Next is the waterfront public space which
22 Jay and Ken just went through. Just high-level
23 points. Again, 1.1 acres of beautiful space, unique
24 design. It will be fully public and open to the
25 public, and that will be recorded in certain legal

documents, it will have to be, and the applicant team will maintain it.

Affordable housing. MIH Option 1. No subsidies required from HPD, and in some of the later slides I'll go a little bit deeper into that.

Community facility and community-serving retail. As you saw in the presentation, there will be some retail on 26th Avenue as you approach the project, and the community facility spaces will be devoted to Urban Upbound and Zone 126 so they've been partners in this and helping us find space for them in the development.

Finally, resiliency. The project will be lifted 9 feet. Ken went through a little bit of how beneficial that will be to his design of the waterfront area, but, again, it will also protect not only the site but the surrounding area from coastal flooding. Next slide, please.

Brownfield remediation. On the left column, you can see how the site looked a few years ago before the remediation was done. You can see the barrels that were collected. There were PCBs and pesticides on the site. Again, the applicant invested 16 million dollars before anything was asked of the

2 City to try and clean up the site, and on the right
3 now you can see basically the after what's been done
4 so hopefully all that soil and sawdust that you see
5 will be waterfront park. Next slide, please.

6 On sustainability, I mentioned this a
7 little bit earlier. Based on a comment from the
8 Community Board and working with the Community Board,
9 the applicant is looking into geothermal energy which
10 will hopefully reduce reliance on fossil fuels in the
11 building. I know Jay and his team are working
12 actually on a building in I believe Brooklyn right
13 now and he could probably speak more to that where
14 he's pursuing this exact thing.

15 JAY VALGORA: We've succeeded for a rental
16 residential building, a collection of buildings, in
17 doing the largest geothermal project in New York
18 City's history. It's under construction. The wells
19 have been drilled, and we think it's cost-effective,
20 and we'd love to do that here. We would have to
21 investigate the hydrology of this site, which we're
22 doing, but we think this is an extraordinary
23 opportunity to do a level of sustainability and to
24 affect future climate change in a way that hasn't
25 been done and on a scale that hasn't been done

2 before. The number 2 project is St. Patrick's
3 Cathedral, and our project is twice as large and
4 already underway so we're going to make a good shot
5 at doing it here because I think the site will be
6 good for it.

7 ROBERT HUBERMAN: Next slide, please.

8 Thank you, Jay.

9 On unit mix, I think this slide actually
10 shows the benefit of early community engagement and
11 the cooperation that the applicant has had with the
12 Community Board specifically. In the old plan column,
13 you can see what was originally proposed and that was
14 a high number of 1-bedrooms and fewer 2-bedrooms and
15 3-bedrooms, and, based on the applicant's engagement
16 with the Community Board and their recommendation and
17 their request that we add 2- and 3-bedrooms, the
18 applicant actually doubled the amount in the plan
19 right now, doubled the amount of 2-bedrooms and 3-
20 bedrooms to add those units to the project. The new
21 plan column is what is proposed in terms of unit mix
22 today. Next slide, please.

23 On affordable housing, this goes further
24 to what Council Member Caban said earlier. On the
25 left, you can see what the applicant started with

1 which is MIH Option 1, 25 percent of the residential
2 floor area must be provided at an average of 60
3 percent of AMI so you can see 134 units at 40 percent
4 of AMI, 67 units at 60 percent of AMI, 134 units at
5 80 percent of AMI. In speaking with the Council
6 Member, and we hope to continue working with her, the
7 applicant has committed to lowering the lowest
8 affordability traunch so going from 40 percent AMI to
9 30 percent AMI and doing this without utilizing the
10 deep affordability option which actually provides few
11 affordable units. This will still be the same number
12 of units, 134, 67, and 134. The big difference being
13 that the 80 percent AMI will go to 90, but the 40
14 percent will go 30 percent of AMI. As I said, we hope
15 to continue working with the Council Member on this.

17 JAY VALGORA: The only other element one
18 might add is that it's also being done without HPD
19 subsidy.

20 ROBERT HUBERMAN: Yes. Next slide, please.
21 Finally, community facility and retail. Just, again,
22 high-level highlights here because it is an important
23 part of the project. There's going to be about 600
24 million dollars invested in the neighborhood through
25 this project. Urban Upbound, a partner in the

2 project, is going to install a job incubator on the
3 site, that is their intent, and that will help with
4 job training and small business development for the
5 local community, and I believe he'll be able to speak
6 about that a little later. The project, itself,
7 should generate about 500 new neighborhood job
8 opportunities so we're excited about that.

9 I believe that is the end of our
10 presentation so thank you for letting us present, and
11 we'd be happy to answer any questions.

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. I'll ask a
13 few questions before I pass it over to Council Member
14 Caban. Have you explored the possibility of having an
15 early childhood education facility on this site? Has
16 the development team or CSA identified alternative
17 sites that will be viable for an early childhood
18 education facility if it is not located within the
19 development?

20 ROBERT HUBERMAN: There have been
21 conversations with the SA about that, about doing it
22 onsite. I think those conversations are still going
23 on and it's part of the environment mitigation that's
24 part of the project so I think that's definitely in
25

2 the talks, it's definitely been discussed, but those
3 are still ongoing.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: This project will add
5 a lot of people, approximately up to 3,713. Please
6 explain why you believe the park renovation you
7 proposed for the Triborough Playground B is
8 sufficient mitigation for the expected impact.

9 ROBERT HUBERMAN: Sure. I may defer to Ken
10 a little bit on this because I know he's helped
11 design it. Actually, Ken, why don't you just explain
12 a little bit on what will go into that design?

13 KEN SMITH: Sure. Playground B is about
14 half underneath the elevated highway and the other
15 half is openair, and right now there are sports
16 courts underneath the elevated highway which are in
17 pretty good shape, but the area that's open to the
18 sky has a children's playground area which is
19 actually not in very good condition. It's not really
20 a state-of-the-art playground. Playground B also has
21 stormwater issues in that there's one small drain for
22 the entire site and so what we're proposing is to
23 develop rain gardens to help with the infiltration,
24 reduce the stormwater going into the neighborhood,
25 and to completely rebuild the children's playground

2 areas to a much higher standard, which will
3 significantly increase, I think, the benefit to the
4 community and upgrade that facility.

5 ROBERT HUBERMAN: I'll just add that on
6 top of that, and the design that you proposed is
7 great, there is also obviously the 1.1 acres that
8 we're doing directly onsite that will be a more
9 direct benefit for the immediate community.

10 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Have you considered
11 additional improvements of other public spaces,
12 particularly on the Astoria Houses Campus?

13 ROBERT HUBERMAN: Yes, and I know Jay in
14 the past has actually worked on the Astoria Houses
15 Campus and proposed improvements there, and I know it
16 is something that we've looked into. I believe that
17 some of those conversations are still ongoing, but
18 the focus on the onsite improvements in Triborough
19 Park, those are more related to the legal
20 requirements. The Astoria Houses improvements, I
21 think, are more community-oriented improvements that
22 the applicant is interested in.

23 JAY VALGORA: Right. It's a little tricky
24 because when we do mitigation, we don't get to choose
25 the site as it were. It's designated under various

2 legal constraints, but I can say, as someone who has
3 had the privilege of working with this community,
4 that several of the other projects that we've done
5 have already committed to significant improvements
6 including within Astoria Houses where we know many of
7 the residents and their leadership and I've worked
8 with them much in the past. Previous projects that
9 we've done that have already committed to
10 improvements there include significant upgrades to
11 the entire esplanade which actually did suffer
12 somewhat under Sandy, improvements to an area where
13 they have the rubbish and trash collection which is
14 quite complex because it's tied into the larger
15 infrastructure of the NYCHA campus, improvements to
16 the streetscape including the restoration of Astoria
17 Boulevard and bringing that back through in order to
18 create more activity and connectivity through the
19 campus, and finally we've already approved the
20 location of 2 schools that have been actually worked
21 out and approved on the NYCHA campus as well as 2
22 buildings with affordable housing including one
23 that's under construction today. Those aren't part of
24 this project because, as we said, we don't get to
25 choose as it were the mitigation, that's kind of

2 chosen for us, but I know my firm, and I've
3 personally been a passionate advocate trying to make
4 improvements to the NYCHA campus, and all the things
5 I mentioned to you are already approved and planned
6 over the next coming years.

7 ROBERT HUBERMAN: The applicant is in
8 close contact with the Astoria Houses. Throughout the
9 whole process, they have been so there's a good line
10 of communication there between there.

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Can you
12 guys just talk right into the mic because it's kind
13 of hard hearing you.

14 JAY VALGORA: Oh, yeah. Sorry about that.

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Lastly before I turn
16 it over to Council Member Caban. Can you please
17 describe your discussion with MTA New York City
18 Transit about potential station improvements at the
19 30th Avenue?

20 ROBERT HUBERMAN: Sure. I think Jason's on
21 the line too so he may be able to talk more about the
22 technical specifics, but there's been a lot of focus
23 on the applicant team about how we're going to deal
24 with usage of the MTA subway stops, and actually I
25 don't know if it was said during the presentation but

2 there are going to be shuttle buses that are going to
3 take people from the site to the closest MTA station,
4 I believe 30th Avenue, to help with that. We've
5 worked very closely with the MTA on the 30th Avenue
6 subway station to see what was feasible in terms of
7 possibly doing something there to improve the
8 station. I believe it was ultimately determined that
9 the improvements would not be feasible, at least at
10 this time to make the specific improvements that were
11 identified in the FEIS.

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. That's the
13 end of my questions. I will now turn it over to
14 Council Member Caban.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CABAN: Thank you. Before I
16 start with my questioning, I actually want to lead
17 with a request. As far as I can tell, you haven't
18 shown renderings from the 26th Avenue, 3rd Street
19 side except that one that's looking up the driveway
20 so it would be really great if y'all could provide
21 that.

22 ROBERT HUBERMAN: Thank you. We'll be
23 happy to do that.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CABAN: Great. Thank you. I
25 know that you showed it in the slide, but in terms of

2 can you just break down very quickly the unit mix
3 income target for the proposed affordable units and
4 estimated rent? If you could throw that back up
5 there, that would be great. When do you expect these
6 units to come online and how many will be constructed
7 in each phase of the development?

8 ROBERT HUBERMAN: First, you said the unit
9 mix, I believe. I don't know if we can put it back
10 up, but I can say it out loud. One-bedrooms is
11 approximately 950 units, 2-bedrooms approximately
12 315, and 3-bedrooms approximately 75.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CABAN: I guess combining
14 my questions. Looking at those numbers, can you talk
15 a little bit about when you expect those units to
16 come online and how many will be constructed in each
17 phase of the development?

18 ROBERT HUBERMAN: In each phase of the
19 development, let's see if I have that information.

20 JAY VALGORA: I'll give you the
21 approximate number and then, of course, we can follow
22 up with a more precise number. The first building to
23 be built we call building 1 which would be the
24 furthest upland so that's the first building which
25 faces directly onto 26th Avenue and 3rd Street so

1 that would be the first one and that is approximately
2 300 units, a little bit less than that but around
3 there. Although that's the first building and it's
4 the most upland, in discussions with City Planning,
5 the public space component would have to be planned
6 from the beginning so we include significant portions
7 of 3rd Street and part of the waterfront from the
8 beginning in Phase 1 even though that's the most
9 upland building and, frankly, the smallest building
10 so there's a significant part of the open space as
11 well as the units committed to in Phase 1. In Phase
12 2, we're showing approximately 400, 450 units, again
13 we'll give you the exact number afterwards if we can
14 just so I make sure I do it accurately. That's the
15 second building which is more positioned within 3rd
16 Street so it's within the center of the project if
17 you will. The third building is the furthest to the
18 north, and that one would also be about 450 units so
19 that would happen third. Each one has commiserate
20 areas of additional public space that are part of it
21 because also we need some staging area for
22 construction in order to not bother residents who are
23 living there. We need area for equipment and so
24 forth, and so we've worked that out. Even though we
25

2 do require staging for construction, very important
3 so you don't disturb people who are living there or
4 you at least minimize the disturbance, that we have
5 included significant areas of the public parks and
6 open space in each phase including kind of front-
7 loading it to a degree so it's there from the
8 beginning of the project.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CABAN: Chair, may I
10 continue?

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CABAN: Thank you. How are
13 you going to ensure that local NYCHA residents are
14 promptly made aware of the new housing opportunities
15 in your buildings?

16 ROBERT HUBERMAN: I'm sorry. Can you
17 repeat that? I had trouble hearing you.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CABAN: How will you ensure
19 that local NYCHA residents are promptly made aware of
20 the new housing opportunities in your buildings?

21 ROBERT HUBERMAN: The applicant, I know
22 they're going to continue to work within the
23 community to make that information available. The
24 only thing I'll say, and I'm not an expert on this so
25 I apologize if I misspeak but, the affordable units,

2 I believe, are done on a lottery basis so while there
3 will be an effort obviously to let the Astoria Houses
4 Campus know that this is available, it's not
5 something that the applicant or the owner picks. It
6 will be done on a lottery basis.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CABAN: Right, but you will
8 have some sort of a process in terms of proactive
9 outreach to let...

10 ROBERT HUBERMAN: Absolutely.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CABAN: Particularly the
12 NYCHA residents know that they have this option.

13 ROBERT HUBERMAN: Absolutely, yes.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CABAN: I think I'm going
15 to leave it there on the affordability questions that
16 I have, but I will say that I do look forward to
17 working with y'all on additional improvements to the
18 affordability options. I've obviously said time and
19 time again that that is the number one priority, but
20 I want to move a little bit into the site design and
21 the public space. While the zoning requires open
22 space on the site to be public, we've seen that
23 waterfront open space can often feel disconnected
24 from other public space and unwelcoming. I know that
25 you addressed some of that in your presentation. I

2 will name again that I can't support this development
3 without assurances that the public's open space will
4 be accessible, inclusive, and usable for the public.
5 Questions related to that. What hours will the
6 waterfront open space be open, and, if not 24/7, how
7 is it going to be closed off?

8 ROBERT HUBERMAN: Just to address that,
9 the hours will be from 6 a.m. to 1 a.m., and that is
10 actually in the agreement with the Parks Department
11 so that will be a requirement and that will be
12 recorded against the property. In terms of how the
13 park will be closed, I'm not sure on the details of
14 that, but I would assume there will be, I'm sure
15 they'll work with you, Ken, to help design something
16 that will be both beautiful and secure for the area,
17 whether it be a gate or something like that during
18 the hours.

19 JAY VALGORA: Actually, we could add to
20 that New York City generally has a standard, I
21 believe it's called the Open Parks Standard, so it's
22 meant to not really gate parks so the park would be
23 closed in the late evening for security purposes,
24 but, in fact, there is no barrier, no gate, no
25 physical barrier, and, as a matter of fact, we've

2 tried very hard through the design, itself, to not
3 only prevent barriers and make the park fully
4 accessible but, in fact, to just visually project the
5 notion of openness and publicness and to make sure
6 that the design, itself, has all those clues and
7 readings that make normal people feel that it's
8 welcoming and accessible so we've tried very hard to
9 do that and welcome any input on that, but that's
10 absolutely been our goal.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CABAN: Again, in our
12 conversations, I've also brought up concerns about
13 surveillance, about the functioning and reach of
14 security or privacy. Do you have plans for private
15 security on the site? If so, what are they? Also,
16 what kind of signage about public use of the open
17 space will be posted?

18 ROBERT HUBERMAN: There is signage that,
19 again, will be legally required to be placed in the
20 open areas at the entrance of the park and within it
21 that will make very clear what the hours of operation
22 for the park are and that it will be a public space,
23 and it'll have the same signage that all public open
24 spaces have in the city so that'll be very clear.

2 In terms of surveillance or security,
3 it's something that I know the applicant is taking
4 very seriously and how that will be done. Their
5 priority is to make sure that this space is going to
6 be beautiful for the people that live there but also
7 openly accessible to everyone in the community so
8 everything will be open and accessible completely,
9 and they'll make sure that the area is safe within
10 standards of what the Parks Department wants.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CABAN: Specifically, do
12 you have any plans for private security on the site?

13 ROBERT HUBERMAN: I'm sorry. Say that
14 again.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CABAN: Do you have any
16 plans for private security on the site?

17 ROBERT HUBERMAN: No, not at this time.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CABAN: Okay. Thank you. In
19 Gowanus, the DCP deliberately required active uses on
20 the canal waterfront to increase the public use of
21 the space. Have you looked at adding active ground
22 floor uses on the waterfront in the development?

23 JAY VALGORA: It's a great question. First
24 of all, we really support retail in general wherever
25 we can. It's tricky doing retail on the waterfront,

1 and I've had many discussions with the community and
2 with City Planning. Because we've had the benefit of
3 working on the peninsula as a whole and the peninsula
4 really needs more retail, we've planned a whole
5 series of retail corridors including some things that
6 have been built which are mostly 26th Avenue as well
7 as portions of the future 4th Street which isn't
8 built and a portion of the waterfront at Astoria Cove
9 because it has enough critical mass that we think it
10 can support retail. Unfortunately, we didn't think
11 that the waterfront on our site would support retail.
12 The client is not against it because retail is a
13 great use so it's not a financial decision at all.
14 It's more of a practical planning decision like will
15 the retail do well so because we felt retail wouldn't
16 do well unfortunately, I'd reference certain sites
17 such as Brooklyn Bridge Park for example, where we
18 did the retail at Empire Stores which supports the
19 park but at other locations further away where it
20 doesn't have critical mass, it's failed and been
21 empty. What we did instead, in response to your
22 question, is we created community facilities, all
23 active edges, we don't want it to feel private, but
24 we want, as Jane Jacobs taught us, eyes on the street
25

2 so throughout the entire project we either have
3 retail, we have lobbies, we have residences where we
4 actually created kind of townhome type residences
5 that have stoops and gardens that face directly into
6 the street like a classic Queens neighborhood, and
7 finally on the waterfront park we've also included
8 some areas where we have the community facility, some
9 of which aren't designated yet for a user, so that's
10 something that could be the source of potential
11 future conversations, but that will activate the edge
12 and make it feel public so we've gone to great
13 lengths to try to achieve that goal.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CABAN: Chair, I believe I
15 just have one more question. I've asked you to share
16 your designs for green infrastructure and shoreline
17 plantings including the saltmarsh grasses as well as
18 your maintenance plans. Can you please provide those
19 details?

20 KEN SMITH: The saltmarsh we're proposing
21 is an existing shelf at the existing water level then
22 we're building up the area above that so we're
23 following the Parks Department standards for the
24 types of plantings that would naturally grow at that
25 elevation, and the owner will have a maintenance

2 agreement with an ecological service that would
3 provide the ongoing maintenance for it.

4 JAY VALGORA: I think we could add to
5 though, because I remember the Councilwoman requested
6 this so Ken, you put together the drawings with the
7 DEP standards, it's actually required by the
8 Department of Environmental Protection, and Ken
9 actually showed how the design conforms to the DEP
10 regulates how you can make sure that saltmarshes and
11 rain gardens and so forth work effectively, and I
12 believe we've forwarded that to the Councilwoman's
13 office or we could do that again. We're happy to
14 provide that.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CABAN: Great. Thank you.
16 Thank you, Chair.

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Council
18 Member Caban.

19 There being no other further questions
20 for this applicant panel, this panel is now excused.

21 Counsel, are there any members of the
22 public who wish to testify on the Halletts North
23 proposal?

24 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, Chair. We'll
25 first hear from members of the public currently here

2 in the room. The first panel of witnesses will
3 include the Reverend Hassan Clark, Carlos Cano, and
4 Victoria Kammer. If you are all here, please come
5 forward.

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Members of the public
7 will be given 2 minutes to speak. Please do not begin
8 until the Sergeant-at-Arms has started the clock.

9 You may begin.

10 REV. HASSAN CLARK: Good afternoon, New
11 York City Council. Good afternoon, Mr. Chair. Good
12 afternoon, Miss Councilwoman. My name is Pastor
13 Hassan Clark. I'm the Senior Pastor of the Center of
14 Hope International in Long Island City New York. I
15 would like to express my unwavering support for the
16 Halletts North Project. The Halletts North team has
17 been in constant communication with the local clergy
18 and community members for the last few years and has
19 made many efforts to keep us engaged and informed
20 throughout this project. Beyond the new affordable
21 housing and job opportunities, this project will
22 offer new community space for Urban Upbound and Zone
23 126, 2 organizations which have done an incredible
24 work in our community for over the last 15 years. I
25 trust that this partnership will bring valuable

2 resources to the residents of Astoria who need it and
3 allow these organizations to continue to support our
4 community. Urban Upbound has several businesses in
5 Astoria already and the business innovation space
6 truly sets this apart from other projects in the
7 area. I have faith in this project, and it will aid
8 in the creation of many more small businesses fueled
9 by our local aspiring entrepreneurs. I support the
10 Halletts North project and ask that you do the same.
11 Thank you so much.

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you.

13 CARLOS CANO: Good afternoon. My name is
14 Carlos Cano, and I'm the Chief Operating Officer at
15 Urban Upbound. I am speaking today on behalf in
16 support of the Halletts North project.

17 Urban Upbound is a community-based
18 organization dedicated to breaking cycles of poverty
19 in public housing and other low-income communities.
20 In our Astoria office, we provide a suite of
21 integrated programs rooted in the (INAUDIBLE) model
22 such as employment opportunities, job training, one-
23 on-one financial counseling, start to finish tax
24 filing, mental health services, and a small business
25 and worker co-op innovation. These programs directly

1 benefit the residents of Astoria Houses and other
2 underserved families in the peninsula. Unfortunately,
3 the state of our Astoria office, itself, often
4 creates barriers that disrupt or impede our ability
5 to deliver services. Thanks to the Halletts North
6 project, Urban Upbound will have an opportunity to
7 finally escape the limitations of our current aging
8 infrastructure and continue to offer vital services.
9 This was made possible through access to an office in
10 the proposed development, from where we'll run an
11 economic incubator that will develop cooperatively
12 owned businesses and employment opportunities,
13 connecting local residents to these good jobs.

14 I would like to highlight that beyond the
15 benefits of this new space which comes at no cost to
16 our organization and adds up to an investment of 1
17 million dollars over 10 years, the developer has
18 listened to our needs and they have worked with us in
19 creating an innovative, smart design that our staff
20 and those we serve can be proud of and (INAUDIBLE).
21 Moreover, we will manage a brand new community space
22 within the new development, also at no cost, named
23 after a long-time Astoria Houses community activist
24 and leader, Miss Claudia Coger. The state-of-the-art
25

2 community space will allow smaller community-based
3 organizations to provide intergenerational
4 programming for the residents of Astoria Houses and
5 the surrounding communities. From these spaces in
6 partnership with Zone 126, Urban Upbound will manage
7 and provide the services the community deserves...

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: You can continue.

9 CARLOS CANO: Thank you. With funding
10 support from the developer. Astoria North is making
11 this all possible. Thank you so much for listening to
12 my testimony.

13 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you.

14 VICTORIA KAMMER: Good afternoon. My
15 name's Victoria Kammer, and I'll be reading today on
16 behalf of Pastor Gilbert Pickett who's a strong
17 supporter of this project but unfortunately couldn't
18 be here today.

19 My name is Pastor Gilbert Pickett, Sr.,
20 and I am the Moderator of the Eastern Baptist
21 Association, an association of 120 churches primarily
22 in Queens, Kings, Nassau, and Suffolk counties. I am
23 also the Senior Pastor of the Mount Baptist Church in
24 Corona as well as a lifelong resident of Queens. I
25 speak today in support of the Halletts North project

1 because it brings new housing and investment to an
2 underserved community where many of my congregants I
3 represent live. I recognize that the housing crisis
4 and disinvestment is not limited to Astoria, but this
5 area is in critical need of new development and
6 housing. This rezoning will improve the quality of
7 life for the whole community by creating new
8 affordable housing options, new places to shop and
9 work, and access to the waterfront. The 300+
10 affordable apartments will benefit the community
11 where high-quality affordable housing resources are
12 scarce. It will further benefit the community by
13 bringing local retail and restaurants for the new
14 residents of the building, existing area residents,
15 and visitors to the surrounding area. The permanent
16 jobs will support local employment and boost our
17 local economy. Please accept this testimony as my
18 support for the rezoning. Thank you.

19
20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Council
21 Member Caban, you have a question for this panel?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CABAN: No. Just thank you
23 for coming out and providing your testimony.

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you.
25

2 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: The next panel will
3 include Dr. Anju Rupchandani, Pastor Corwin Mason,
4 Claudia Coger. If you all are here, please come
5 forward.

6 Dr. Rupchandani then Pastor Corwin Mason
7 then Claudia Coger.

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: You may begin.

9 DR. ANJU RUPCHANDANI: Good afternoon. My
10 name is Dr. Anju J. Rupchandani, and I'm the proud
11 Executive Director of Zone 126. I'm here to express
12 my support today in favor of this project. I'm
13 addressing you today from a very unique perspective.
14 I'm someone who has grown up in Astoria and Long
15 Island City, and I have the privilege of running a
16 non-profit organization here. My family moved here
17 close to 40 years ago, and I've been fortunate enough
18 to attend great local public schools within walking
19 distance of my home. Now that I have the privilege to
20 lead an organization that's from cradle to college to
21 career supporting children and families specifically
22 in NYCHA, Astoria Houses, Ravenswood Houses, and
23 Queensbridge Houses through partnerships and
24 collaborations, I couldn't be more excited for a
25 project like this to support our needs, for children

2 and families, through partnerships around college and
3 career readiness, workforce development, literacy,
4 STEM, mental health, college counseling, and much
5 more for our children in the area. I know all too
6 well what it's like to grow up in poverty where my
7 family did not have equal opportunities and so I
8 often ask myself the question what role can new
9 developments play here in the area in terms of
10 addressing longstanding inequities. I have had
11 numerous conversations with the development team, and
12 I wholeheartedly believe that they plan to address a
13 lot of the community's challenges that have further
14 been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. I truly
15 believe we'll create opportunities to provide the
16 support needed for many of our neighbors. I have to
17 commend the team for their continuous efforts to
18 engage with the community to develop a project that
19 not only supports the local residents but
20 longstanding trusted partners like Urban Upbound as
21 well as Zone 126 that are going to provide all of
22 these activities to support our local Astorians. I,
23 here at Zone 126 today, am in support of this project
24 so that we can support local hiring opportunities for
25 minorities and women of color like myself alongside

2 with Urban Upbound. They're paving the way for us to
3 do so, and we need to support this project. I hope
4 that everyone will figure out a way to expedite this
5 process. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you.

7 PASTOR CORWIN MASON: Good afternoon,
8 Committee Council. I'm Pastor Corwin S. Mason, Senior
9 Pastor of the Community Church of Astoria, and I
10 thank you for allowing me to speak today. As an
11 advocate for my community, I'm always looking for
12 projects that will bring truly affordable options to
13 our residents. New affordable housing in Western
14 Queens is not a desire but rather a need. Many NYCHA
15 residents are living in substandard conditions where
16 they are constantly overlooked and grossly
17 underserved. Affordable housing is incredibly
18 limited, leaving many residents with no way out of
19 the NYCHA cycle. I'm here today to express my support
20 for the Halletts North project. This development will
21 bring much needed housing, new jobs, and a community
22 space to benefit residents of all ages. This project
23 is a glimpse of hope for thousands of Astoria
24 residents seeking new affordable housing. Offering
25 300+ affordable housing units will make a major

2 impact in our community. I strongly believe that this
3 project is a step in the right direction, working
4 with reliable non-profit partners like Urban Upbound
5 to ensure local hiring and job training. Please
6 accept this testimony as my support for the rezoning.
7 Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. You may
9 begin.

10 CLAUDIA COGER: Good afternoon. My name is
11 Claudia Coger, and I've been a resident of Astoria
12 Houses for over 60 years and am a former President of
13 Astoria Houses for many years, the Tenants
14 Association. I'm a tireless advocate for social
15 welfare, education, and tenants' rights in the
16 Astoria community. As an advocate for my community, I
17 speak today in support of the Halletts North project
18 because it will bring new investment, resources, and
19 affordable housing options to our neighborhood. For
20 the past 2 years, Halletts North has proven to be a
21 true community partner and has shown a vested
22 interest in our neighborhood. This is beyond a simple
23 promise for affordable housing in a new building. The
24 Hallett North team has been on the ground talking to
25 residents, hearing our opinions, and lending support

1 when we were in the most need. Throughout the
2 pandemic, the Hallett North team played an
3 instrumental role in the food distribution happening
4 daily in Astoria Houses. In October 2020, a severe
5 gas leak in Astoria Houses left residents without gas
6 for their stoves for many months. Halletts North
7 partnered with the Astoria Tenants Association to
8 distribute 21 consecutive days of hot meals to the
9 residents. Whether it was food distribution, holiday
10 gifts for the children, turkeys for Thanksgiving,
11 when we needed support, Halletts North was there for
12 us. I look forward to continued conversation with the
13 development team to how this project can benefit the
14 residents of Astoria Houses who live just minutes
15 away from the proposed project. I'm excited that our
16 community will have new programming and access to the
17 waterfront. I have faith this team will do right by
18 our community and know this will be a fruitful
19 partnership and I appreciate today that we sit in the
20 presence of our Councilwoman, Councilwoman Tiffany
21 Caban, who is in support and ever on the grounds with
22 us in Astoria Houses. We ask you please to accept
23 this testimony, my support, for the rezoning. Thank
24

2 you for your time and consideration in this important
3 request.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much.
5 Council Member Caban.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CABAN: Again, I just want
7 to say thank you and also it's always good to see
8 y'all.

9 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: If there are any
10 other members of the public with us in the room who
11 wish to testify, please, once again, see a Sergeant-
12 at-Arms, complete a speaker card, and then we will
13 take your testimony.

14 At this time, we will take remote
15 testimony from one witness at this time, Anna Ortega.
16 Do we have Anna Ortega?

17 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Anna, are you there?

19 ANNA ORTEGA: Hi. Good afternoon,
20 everyone.

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you.

22 ANNA ORTEGA: Good afternoon, Committee,
23 Chair Riley, and Committee. My name is Anna Ortega,
24 and I am a member of 32BJ. I am a 15-year resident of
25 Queens. I am here this afternoon on behalf of 32BJ's

2 85,000 members in New York City. We are the essential
3 workers that keep the buildings and city running,
4 residential building workers, janitors, security
5 officers, and other vital roles in the property
6 services sector.

7 We are pleased to express our support for
8 Halletts North rezoning. 32BJ supports responsible
9 development that invests in and benefits our
10 communities, importantly the creation of good family-
11 sustaining jobs. I am happy to report that the
12 developers of this project reached out to the union
13 early in the process and made a credible commitment
14 to creating prevailing wage building service jobs at
15 this site. We estimate 17 building service workers
16 will permanently staff the site. These jobs will come
17 with not only fair wages that meet the industry
18 standard but also qualify affordable health insurance
19 and other meaningful benefits like paid time. We know
20 that members of the local community typically fill
21 jobs like this.

22 We are also pleased to see that 350 of
23 1,400 residential units on the project will be
24 affordable housing in accordance with the Mandatory
25 Inclusionary Housing program. This will bring a

2 greatly needed increase in the supply of affordable
3 units for working people in Queens. With the combined
4 commitment to good jobs and affordable units, this
5 project will bring the opportunity for upward
6 mobility and security to working class families. The
7 Community Board has approved the project, the Borough
8 President has issued their support, and the City
9 Planning Commission has approved it. I respectfully
10 urge the Committee to approve the rezoning. Thank you
11 so much for your time.

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Anna.

13 SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chair Riley, that
14 is it for public witnesses registered and present at
15 this time.

16 I'll remind the viewing public and anyone
17 else with us today that written testimony may be
18 submitted via email to
19 landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov,
20 landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov.

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Counsel.
22 Council Member Caban, do you have anything else?

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CABAN: No. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Council
25 Member. There being no other members of the public

2 who wish to testify on Preconsidered LUs related to
3 the ULURP numbers C 220196 ZMQ and N 220197 ZRQ
4 relating to the Halletts North rezoning proposal, the
5 public hearing is now closed, and the items are laid
6 over.

7 That concludes today's business. I would
8 like to thank the members of the public, my
9 Colleagues, Subcommittee Counsel, Land Use and other
10 Council staff, and the Sergeant-at-Arms for
11 participating in today's meeting.

12 This meeting is hereby adjourned. Thank
13 you. [GAVEL]

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date August 23, 2022