

From: Anita Stephan <ags813@icloud.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 30, 2021 2:44 PM
To: Speaker Corey Johnson <speakerjohnson@council.nyc.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Community in dire need of your help.

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Mr. Corey Johnson

Speaker of the New York City Council

December 2, 2021 meeting For Rezoning 31Street &Hoyt Ave!
I and my community are in dire need for your help.

My name is Anita Stephan and I am writing you in concerns of the rezoning of 31Street and Hoyt Ave.

I lost my dad a few months back, and been dealing with a lot.
But I love my home, community, and the generation of neighbors that lived here for over 50 yr.
Our families past there home to there kids.

I took the time since this is very important to me and my community to start a petition against this project.
I got 225 signatures. 175 signatures were from neighbors that would be close proximity to this project.
Community board one of Queens voted against it 25 to 4.
Buildings are out of context with the adjacent low density and mid density neighborhood character.

When developers heard there was a petition going around they got one going for the project.
400 Signatures. But they were shady about it!
Only 4 were from the area. All were from out of state.
How do you trust developers who do this.
You can't! There are only out for themselves, and we the community, tax payers pay for the faults.
While they get tax breaks.

It is unfair for my community, when we do not even have a district representative to speak for us.

This rezoning should not get passed.
The developers can still build with the zoning that is in place now.
The affordable housing they are offering is very small.
The building they will build if zoning gets passed will overshadow our homes school, and the Hoyt park.

Homeowner will not be able to put in solar panels.
But the builders can!
This is So not right!

Why is it that the community has spoken but no one listens.
How can you vote on a project without even coming and looking at the site in person.
If you did you will see that this rezoning is out of character.

Beside that they want to put a daycare where Neptune dinner is.
So unhealthy for children.
The grand central exit is there the RFK bridge, so many car, and exhaust fumes.
So, the children will be playing outside breathing the fumes in.
I was surprise that no one considered this.

Over crowded train system, no parking , this project is not good for the community.
When there was a shooting on the RFK bridge on Sunday traffic was back up for many many hours.
It scared me that if there was an emergency no ambulance could get through.
The surrounding area was affected.

You were opposed of Amazon coming to our neighborhood.
Which I helped, and was happy that it didn't go through.
Again Thank you for that.

Please I am asking you, My community, the people who live here are asking, to help the Astoria community , to not allow this rezoning to go through.

Also right behind staple are a row of home that are historical, they still have terracotta pipes.
They are also third generation of family that live there, for many many years.
So what they have to sell there home and move?

I have copies of petition, if needed.
I know city Council is next to vote, on Dec 2, 2021.
But I also just lost a dear friend and need to attend a funeral, so I can't sit in on the zoom meeting.
There are many more reasons that this should not get passed, but it should be on the minutes from meetings, that you could find.

Thank you so much, and much appreciated for talking the time to read this.
Anita Stephan
24-24 33 rd Street Astoria N.Y 11102
718 278-2068

Sent from my iPad

From: [Jeremy Welsh-Loveman](#)
To: [Land Use Testimony](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comment in Support of the 31st Street and Hoyt Ave. Rezoning
Date: Monday, October 11, 2021 7:05:12 PM

Dear Land Use Committee,

I'm a Dutch Kills resident and live in Queens CB1. I want to comment in strong support of the proposed rezoning at 31st St and Hoyt Avenue. I think this rezoning would bring extensive housing affordability and environmental benefits. Currently this area is significantly built out, there are few areas to redevelop, especially near the subway line. The City should therefore allow the developers to maximize this unique opportunity to replace one story buildings and surface parking lots with apartment buildings. Given the noise of the Q train, it would also be great to allow the developer to build taller so there are more units which are not exposed to the noise of the train.

The City is facing a massive housing shortage, building more market rate and affordable housing is vital. The MIH affordable units that would be created with this rezoning will provide significant direct benefits to families in desperate need of high quality, rent regulated units. The market rate units will also, as [research](#) shows, reduce the demand for other existing units thus making them more affordable. The housing stock in this area is very old, we need to seize this opportunity to build as much new housing as possible. We need to put vague concerns, such as "being out of the scale of the neighborhood", to the side and focus on the really important issue, the need for housing. This area is right next to the subway and 278, it's already a very busy area and these proposed buildings would have almost no noticeable impact to nearby residents.

There would also be significant environmental benefits to this rezoning, as it would allow more people to use and commute via the subway, taking cars off the street and reducing CO2 emissions. This is an imminently walkable neighborhood, walking distance to Astoria park and restaurants on 30th Ave. Climate change is an imminent threat both to Queens and the world, we must factor it into policy making and land use decisions.

To conclude, I think this proposed rezoning will bring substantial housing affordability and environmental benefits and I hope the Borough President approves this request.

Thanks,
Jeremy Welsh-Loveman

Good morning, Council Members.

My name is Joe Morreale. I am here as a constituent to recommend against adopting ULURP items #210200 ZMQ and #N210201 ZRQ. I am a ten-year resident of Community Board 1, first as a renter, and now alongside my wife, a homeowner.

While my written comments provided alongside this testimony go into much more detail, here are some key takeaways I urge you to consider before voting:

Even if this action does not pass, the applicants are free to develop mixed-use commercial and residential properties without rezoning. They are also welcome to offer MIH units without rezoning. Having additional housing stock and MIH units in a neighborhood is a laudable goal. Rezoning is not a prerequisite for this outcome. The EAS and the applicants' presentation are free of any identified need for this change, and I subsequently propose the applicants have failed to meet this basic threshold for approval, even after submitting a revised EAS this summer.

As the EAS plainly lays out, and my comments explore in detail, approving this request will raise throughput at the Astoria Blvd. subway station beyond its design criteria. This will result in a condition where the platform is unable to disgorge the passengers disembarking during peak times, potentially resulting in unsafe conditions for our neighbors. The EAS downplays this by saying that the impact does not rise to the level of "significantly adversely impacted," but this is akin to saying the house is okay because only the kitchen is on fire.

The incremental traffic this proposal states it will bring in the EAS will come at the cost of roads more hostile to pedestrians and bikers alike. It will add dozens of vehicles to the nightly queue of drivers searching for on-street parking, even as we keep supply constant. More cruising means more emissions and greater potential for accidents.

The situation for our public schools is like that of the subways, except the schools are already beyond capacity, even in the case of no action.

If you are interested in rezoning along 31st St., should it not be part of a concerted effort that draws City and State partners into the conversation? Should we not lever these partners first to acquire educational and transit resources that can scale with the growth of the neighborhood? Why do these properties need to be rezoned when the applicants are already able to accomplish their goals of mixed-use development under the current zoning text?

At its core, this is a question of consent. The applicants are asking for you to consent to much more than a simple rezoning. They want your consent to build out of character with the zoning DCP laid down with extensive community input in 2010. They want your consent to only provide the bare minimum of MIH units as required by law. They want your consent to busy our streets with new cars looking for parking. They want your consent to create unsafe conditions at the Astoria Blvd. train station. They want your consent to overcrowd local schools. They don't need it.

I encourage you to vote against this proposal and share these, and any other concerns you have with the City Council.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



31st St. Zoning Map and Text Amendment

Comments Against Adoption

[City Planning Commission Discussion Guide](#)

Comments and salient discussion topics from the community pertaining to rezoning Astoria for consideration at the December 2 Public Hearing.
Submitted to the New York City Council Land Use and Zoning Committee on December 5, 2021.

Joe Morreale
Constituent, Queens Community Board 1

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Preface

Purpose

This document was originally submitted to the members of Queens Community Board 1 (CB1) Land Use and Zoning Subcommittee prior to the Committee’s recommendation against adopting the zoning map and text amendment specified. It was modified to suit the audience of the Queens Borough President (QBP), City Planning Commission (CPC), and now the New York City Council (NYCC).

The purpose of this document is to provide NYCC with specific, fact-based concerns that CB1 constituents share regarding the proposed actions. Ideally, it will act as a guide for discussion during the public Community Board hearing and help shed insight into the total impact of this project on the community at large.

This document is broken up by sections that track selected categories found in the relevant Environmental Assessment Statement (EAS). To aid comprehension, these sections appear in the same order they do in the EAS amendments. Each section will have three subsections: a fact-based analysis of the total impact of the proposed actions, a carefully considered response to the arguments put forth by the applicants (either in the EAS or in documented CB1 hearings, and finally, suggested questions NYCC should ask of itself prior to discussing the zoning text and map amendments. Some sections may be further subdivided based on subject matter.

In support of constructive discussion, the applicants’ proposals as stated in the EAS and in cited public settings are taken in good faith. No aspect of this document is meant to disparage, disrespect, or otherwise disregard the hours of effort required on behalf of the applicants and their associates to prepare the EAS for public submission. Where discrepancies in data appear to exist, they are called out for purposes of holistic public discourse.

On Data

Specific facts and figures in this document pertaining to the development scheduled under CEQR# 21DCP117Q (henceforth “the proposed actions”) come from the most recent EAS filed in support of this project, currently dated June 18, 2021, available from the NYC Office of Environmental Coordination under a blanket citation from the applicants (MDM Development Group LLC, 2441 Astoria Associates, 31 Neptune LLC, 2021). Citations to this document will reference the page or table with the supporting datum in parentheses.

Any figures not from this EAS will be cited appropriately.

Executive Summary

As NYCC considers a recommendation for the proposed action pursuant to the authority granted to it under New York City’s (“the City”) Uniform Land Use and Review Procedure (ULURP), there exist several worrying concerns documented in the EAS that have grave implications for Astoria and CB1 residents. These impacts and associated rebuttals to the applicants’ proposal are substantiated with facts and observations that should be immediately recognizable as experiences shared by the thousands of residents who work, live, and relax in and around the bounds of CB1. In light of concerns stemming from areas of public policy, socioeconomic conditions, community facilities, transportation, and construction, Astoria and her constituents are best served by NYCC voting against the proposed zoning text and map amendment.

EAS Analysis

Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy

Analysis

This proposal asks NYCC to approve zoning map and text amendment to change a thin stretch of lots running north along 31st St. from Hoyt Ave. (“the project area”) from designation C4-3 to either C4-5X or C4-4 (Figure A-3).

The project area was last rezoned in May 2010 as part of a larger Department of Community Planning rezoning that spanned all or portions of 238 blocks (A-1).

The proposed action will bring in a series of developments between 11 and 13 stories (115’-145’) spread across 4 sites (A-9). If the action does not pass, development can still occur at these lots under the existing C4-3 zoning regulation.

The proposed action would bring either 97 (25%) or 116 (30%) affordable dwelling units to the project area (A-4).

Response

The need for additional mixed-use density in Astoria, especially when co-located with transit nodes such as the 31st St./Hoyt Ave. N intersection, is undisputed in these comments. Adding additional housing units to a neighborhood is also an excellent way to offset rising rents, although it should not be considered a panacea by any means. The applicants’ proposal to include mandatory inclusionary housing (MIH) units and community facilities under the appropriate provisions also deserve plaudits.

The primary concerns in this arena stem from the apparent piecemealing of 31st St. development. If the Community Board intends to permit a canyon of high-density mixed-use properties along the 31st St. corridor, this should be part of a larger debate about the future of Astoria and what all residents- renters and homeowners want it to appear, in a manner similar to the 2010 effort. As the EAS itself states: the 2010 rezoning was undertaken in part “...to protect neighborhood character from out-of-scale development.” (A-1) This therefore implies that the proposal on the table is inherently out-of-scale. To date, the best argument the applicants have given for the proposed actions is that “...the project area is immediately adjacent to transit and located on wide streets.” (Queens Community Board 1, 2021) Even the no-action proposal brings a level of density inconsistent with the surrounding area- the tallest buildings currently existing along the project area are approximately seven stories tall with additional bulk permitted for mechanical purposes. These developments will dwarf their neighbors and in the case of site 3, encroach on P.S. 085, directly across the street. The development will block open-sky views for students and enable residents to casually observe students at will during times when school is in session. The impacts of this behavior on the children of Astoria cannot be positive. This was clear to CB1, and one member of CPC, drawing the only “No” vote of the one dozen reports considered that day (NYC Department of City Planning, 2021).

The September 1, 2021 CB1 Land Use & Zoning Committee meeting applicants presentation also identified HANAC as the administrator of the proposed MIH units (Queens Community Board 1, 2021). During the 2010 rezoning process, HANAC filed comments that were subsequently endorsed and adopted supporting higher density for a property at 31-30/40 32nd St. (NYC City Planning Commission, 2010). It can therefore be reasonably asserted that MIH concerns were considered as part of the prior rezoning action and that the subsequent inclusion of MIH in this proposal alone should not be used to justify upzoning in this context.

Furthermore, this rezoning effectively represents a wealth transfer, with homeowners within the half-mile impact area (and beyond) facing reduced property values and in service of literal rent-seeking applicants with few long-term shared interests in the neighborhood. Reductions in property values will stem from new shadow, noise, traffic (pedestrian and vehicular), and the loss of views. It should be noted that the no-action consideration from the applicants is to retain the existing conditions within the project area (A-8), weakening the argument that they are rezoning for any altruistic reason related to wanting to increase the housing supply. Having purchased the land, the applicants are more than welcome to develop mixed-use housing as-of-right under the existing C4-3 zoning designation.

This proposal also only includes the bare minimum required affordable units under the MIH process. Several members of CB1 voted against the proposal on the basis that the proposed action did not go far enough to alleviate housing concerns and wanted to see more affordable housing accompanying the proposed action in order to make greater progress in the push for affordable housing (Community Board 1, Queens, 2021). NYCC is encouraged to ask property managers to do more in service of housing equity and not settle for the minimum as the standard for rezoning.

Finally, the applicants fail to demonstrate a need for this rezoning. Appendix A, §IV- literally titled “Purpose and Need for Proposed Actions” spends three paragraphs discussing what approval will do without talking to why the development is required (A-4). At no point is an actual need identified.

Considerations

- Is NYCC comfortable with why this zoning change is needed, especially since these lots were rezoned as recently as 2010?
- Has NYCC considered this rezoning in context of a larger plan to rezone or is this simply opportunistic development?
 - What does NYCC feel an appropriate level of zoning is for this corridor?
 - Should the entirety of these blocks be rezoned to fit the above instead of just these lots?
- Has NYCC considered the impact of extreme vertical development on the students of P.S. 085 across the street from site 3?
- Will any of the market rate units be set aside for current residents of Astoria prior to open solicitation?
- Will any of the MIH units be set aside for current residents of Astoria?
- Is the loss of neighborhood property value worth the increased density?
- Why does the proposed action need to be so vertical?
 - Can Astoria’s densification be spread out to evenly allocate costs to residents?

Socioeconomic Conditions

Analysis

Employment

The project proposed is estimated to immediately displace 120 jobs and four commercial businesses (D-1). This contrasts with the expected 2028 no-action employment condition of 99 jobs (Table A-4). The estimated with-action employment figure is 233 jobs, for a net gain of 113 jobs over six years (Table A-4).

Specific identified uses for some of the commercial space under the proposed actions include daycare, senior center, and a community center (A-5).

Affordability

The proposed actions are expected to bring in 389 DUs, a net increase of 367 DUs for the lots improved (D-13). Of these, between 97 (25%) and 116 (30%) are expected to be affordable (A-4). The not-yet-final working assumption is MIH Option 2 and implies 116 MIH units, leaving 273 market-rate units (D-11).

The EAS uses the US HUD definition of more than 30% of income as the threshold for “rent burdened.”

Table D-7 lists the average asking rents for Astoria in July 2020. For comparison, comparable rents from 2019 are provided below, along with their percentage shift from a year before:

Table 1: Average Asking Rents in Astoria Comparison- 2019/2020

DU Size	Average Rent (July 2020)	Average Rent (July 2019)	Shift (%)
Studio	\$1,882	\$1,940	(2.99)
One-bedroom	\$2,086	\$2,236	(6.71)
Two-bedroom	\$2,399	\$2,443	(4.26)
Three-bedroom	\$3,029	N/A	N/A

Note: July 2020 figures taken from EAS (D-10). July 2019 figures (MNS, 2019) did not include average rents for three-bedroom apartments and extend beyond the half-mile study area used in the EAS.

Response

Employment

On the topic of retail, the applicants’ characterization that the project area “needs activation” should strike NYCC as inappropriate (Queens Community Board 1, 2021). Both Neptune Diner (prior to COVID-related restaurant restrictions) and Staples enjoy healthy consumer throughput, and while the applicants are not to be faulted for wanting to increase rents on their land, characterizing the existing commercial businesses as devoid of pedestrian activity is to imply that the purpose of Astorians is simply to exist and spend money. Staples provides an important venue for many renters to take care of tasks that they may not have the equipment for at home (such as printing) and for all residents to send packages in a comfortable radius from their home. The applicants have not committed to replacing the services that the proposed actions will eliminate, nor have they identified specific replacements for the services currently provided. One could argue that it is not their responsibility, but their lack of effort indicates a general disdain for the impacts the proposed actions will have.

Childcare in New York City is relatively expensive, so while additional supply of this service may help lower the long-term costs of this service, it is unclear how many families will see the impacts of this benefit. There is also currently a daycare facility across the street from development site 3, so if there is data supporting the proposal for additional daycare services, the applicants have yet to use it in making their case. If the sole justification for additional bulk comes from offering daycare, NYCC should ask itself what benefit saturating 31st St. with large-window retail and daycare provides the residents of the neighborhood.

Affordability

On the issue of market-rate affordability, the project proposers appear to have inappropriately characterized where their units will fall with respect to the neighborhood incomes and rents. The applicants have used 2020 data to support their expected market-rate rents; note how table D-7 aligns exactly with the “Average Rent” column in table D-9 in the EAS. It should be self-evident that 2020 data is skewed by outlier rents in a neighborhood that was trending significantly upward prior to COVID pressures in 2020. When the City and neighborhood recover, rents will likely rise back to levels in line or even higher than 2019 figures,

putting these units out of reach of neighborhood renters. NYCC should consider this rebound in the context of the incomes that prospective renters are likely to have, especially in six years' time.

Furthermore, regardless of what happens with rent, the metrics used for affordability more broadly, namely the 30% of gross income threshold for "rent-burdened" should strike NYCC as artificially inflated. The applicants' use of a national threshold masks the relatively higher cost of living for a prosperous coastal metropolis such as New York City. A better metric for affordability might be rents based on 30% of take-home pay as opposed to gross income, which the NYCC can and should request the City apply to the proposed actions.

Considerations

- Is NYCC comfortable with the replacement of Staples and Neptune Diner in favor of childcare and as-yet unspecified retail?
- Where can affected residents find replacement services for Staples' offerings?
- Does NYCC know if the incremental childcare services resulting from the proposed action is sufficient to offset the corresponding demand increase the action creates?
- Is NYCC clear on why Table D-9 in the EAS sum to a total of 138 market-rate DUs when the applicants expect 273 market-rate units on page D-11?
 - How large will the missing units be?
 - What is their expected rental rate?
 - How does this impact the figures shown in Table D-9?
 - Is NYCC comfortable approving these zoning amendments in the absence of this information?
- Of the DUs listed in Table D-9, a plurality of units are one-bedroom. Does NYCC feel this adequately serves the needs of Astoria's families?
- When Astoria recovers from COVID, rents are likely to rise. Has NYCC considered the impact of market-rate apartments at these higher levels on the neighborhood?
- Is NYCC comfortable with the applicants' definition of affordable?

Community Facilities

Analysis

There are four elementary schools and two intermediate schools within the Community School District (CSD) 30 subdistrict where the project is located (Figure E-1). The elementary schools are oversubscribed to the tune of 192 seats, an 8% exceedance. The intermediate schools have a net of 113 available seats total, although the closest intermediate school, P.S. 122, is oversubscribed by 30 students (11% exceedance) (Table E-1).

The proposed action is expected to impute 40 additional elementary school students and 50 additional intermediate school students by 2028 (Table E-3).

Response

NYCC should have grave concerns about the immediate and long-term impacts this development will have on Astoria's educational infrastructure. Even without this specific development, Astoria's schools are expected to be significantly oversubscribed by 129-145% by 2028 (Table E-2). While this is not the fault of the applicants, NYCC should be evaluating neighborhood growth options that pair new development with appropriate educational capacity.

Considerations

- Why is new housing needed when local schools are already oversubscribed?
- What resources will NYCC leverage to ensure appropriate educational facilities are available when construction is complete?

Transportation

Analysis

Traffic

The EAS estimates a net vehicular parking requirement of 147 parking spaces during the overnight period and are only offering 123 on-site parking spaces. This yields a net impact of 24 new parking-space requirements in the surrounding neighborhood (J-4).

The EAS estimates an additional 108 weekday AM and 116 weekday PM peak hours (J-9).

Subway

The burden of the proposed actions is expected to fall overwhelmingly on the Astoria Blvd. N/W subway stop (J-2). An estimated 240 incremental subway trips (of which 177 are outbound) are expected during AM peak commute hours (assumed 9-10 AM, but not specified in EAS), and 263 trips (159 inbound) are expected during PM commute hours (assumed 4-5 PM, but not specified in EAS).

As a result of this development, the southeast staircase leading from the Astoria Blvd. platform to overpass level (P3/P4) will exceed its capacity at peak times (J-28).

Response

Traffic

24 additional vehicles looking for overnight parking during evening commute hours is a troubling statistic. The primary concern is environmental: cars circling blocks for parking produce unnecessary carbon, pollutant, and noise emissions. Circling cars also pose a hazard to pedestrians walking in the vicinity of these additional vehicles. A secondary concern is the implied deference to vehicle traffic- these cars will be looking to use space that could instead be repurposed as bike lanes, which have a larger societal impact than permitting public space to be used for temporary storage of private assets.

No detailed comments on the traffic impacts of the proposed action are necessary- it is assumed that the 31st St./Hoyt Ave. intersection appears to already be beyond management at peak times. Casual observation shows that rush hour generally involves extended idling, excessive honking, and leads to congestion up and down 31st St. and immediate side streets. An additional hundred trips during these times cannot be beneficial to this situation.

Subway

The claim by the applicants that the N and the W operating lines are two distinct subway routes as the justification for not having to perform a detailed analysis of subway line haul conditions (J-2) may be technically legal but is practically ignorant. Under CEQR guidelines, the threshold for additional analysis is 200 trips on a single line, a threshold which the EAS plainly concludes is met in both the morning and evening peak commute hours. While the lines are signed differently, NYCC should recognize that the N/W lines operate as a de facto single line for purposes of commuting into Manhattan. They share tracks and stations, riders overwhelmingly do not discriminate between trains, and the lines do not diverge meaningfully prior to the Canal St. station in lower Manhattan. Reasonable members of the Community Board should understand

that for purposes of workday commuting, the addition of so many additional riders will place additional strain on a mass transit system that was overloaded and underfunded prior to 2020. One only needs to look at how crowded the 30th Ave. and Broadway platforms have become during morning commutes or try boarding a 5:45 PM train at Lexington Avenue headed towards Ditmars Blvd. to understand the need for further analysis and study. NYCC can and should request this study as part of its comments.

As an immediately applicable example of the above, the EAS requires a Level 2 Screening Assessment for the Astoria Blvd. station, which is effectively served by only a single set of tracks in either direction. The station analysis demonstrates that the southeast staircase leading from the platform will be over capacity at peak times, leading to a potentially hazardous condition where riders must wait on the platform for the stairs to clear. This behavior can currently be observed during evening peak times at the Ditmars Blvd. station. In cases where the MTA is running trains express from Queensboro Plaza to make up for delays, freshly arriving trains may pull into the station before the prior train's riders have had time to clear the platform (to say nothing of new riders hoping to board a train). With open tracks on both sides of the platform, NYCC is encouraged to view the proposed action as a risk that puts the lives of Astorians on the line for the sake of concentrated growth.

It appears that for purposes of the subway station Level 2 Screening Assessment, ridership figures were adjusted for pre-COVID figures, whereas this was not the case for determining affordable rent levels. Inconsistency in treatment methods should lead NYCC to apply a high level of scrutiny when considering all claims made by the applicants.

Considerations

Traffic

- Is NYCC okay with adding additional vehicles to the existing population of street parking vehicles in the absence of new curbside supply?
- Is NYCC comfortable with the implications of additional vehicles circling the block looking for parking, especially in the immediate vicinity of an elementary school and existing daycare?
- How does the addition of over one hundred peak-hour trips through the 31st St./Hoyt Ave. intersection benefit Astoria and her residents?

Subway

- Does NYCC agree with the applicants' claim that the N/W lines are sufficiently different to not warrant more detailed analysis for the subway haul (Level 2 Screening Assessment)?
- Is NYCC comfortable adding more peak riders at the Astoria Blvd. subway stop in the absence of any commitments for increased service by MTA?
- Is NYCC comfortable overloading the southeast Astoria Blvd. platform stairway at peak times and creating potentially unsafe loading conditions as riders wait for stairway capacity to materialize?

Construction

Analysis

The EAS notes that construction of the proposed developments "...would be expected to have the potential to result in elevated noise levels at nearby receptors, and noise due to construction would at times be noticeable." (M-3)

The construction schedule calls for a total of 60 months (5 years) of total construction time. The total project scope runs from late 2021 through to early 2028, with a yearlong gap from 2024 to 2025 (M-6).

Site 4 is not currently under the control of the applicants (M-6).

Some work may extend beyond the 3:30 PM normal end time to finish “certain critical tasks.” (M-7) Resources required on average are 54 workers and 10 trucks (Table M-2). This average can be further broken down into 108 workers and 18 trucks for active work during the ‘21-’24 time period and 24 workers and 5 trucks for active work during the ‘25-’28 time period. Peak values are 153 workers and 22 trucks. Maximum daily parking demand from construction workers is estimated at 83 spaces (M-13).

Response

Reasonable residents of CB1 cannot say they didn’t know what they were getting into when they chose to either purchase or rent property in New York City. Construction is a vital component of the City’s economy and a sure sign of economic health. With that said NYCC should make sure it is well-versed about the length and duration of construction, especially when many neighborhood residents continue to work from home. Construction brings dust, noise, and vibrations to the areas it impacts, to the detriment of residents’ physical and mental health. The construction plan calls for two extended bouts of construction—each 11 quarters in duration to support the proposed action. Residents and homeowners cannot be expected to reasonably endure this resumed disruption, especially in the aftermath of two recent developments not requiring upzoning along the same stretch of 31st St. from Hoyt Ave. N to 23rd Ave. that ran through the 2020 pandemic.

This work is also expected to be punishing to the existing housing stock, much of which was constructed in the 1920s and has largely been incrementally maintained instead of rebuilt in the interim. This issue was briefly brought up during the September 1, 2021 CB1 Land Use and Zoning Subcommittee meeting, and while the applicants has expressed a desire to help homeowners track any construction impacts, it is unlikely that these issues will be resolved satisfactorily by the time NYCC votes on this proposal and unclear if their services will be at all beneficial to existing homeowners if they do materialize (Community Board 1, Queens, 2021). As of the submission of this letter, an offer to sit down and talk through community concerns has been proposed, but no date has been set.

Additionally, a high number of private vehicles are expected to enter the neighborhood as a result of this work. Many of the same questions pertaining to traffic and parking that will apply long-term when the proposed actions are completed will be replicated immediately on an ongoing basis if this rezoning is allowed to proceed. Some of this could be alleviated by refusing to grant the exception and instead asking the applicants to present more modest plans instead.

Considerations

- Can construction disruptions be reduced by asking for a reduced scope of work?
- Does NYCC have a clear expectation for what will happen to site 4 if the proposed action is taken and then the applicants are unable to acquire ownership of all parcels of land?
- Is NYCC comfortable advancing this resolution if affected homeowners have yet to reach agreement with the applicants on mitigating impacts to property?
- Like the traffic questions above, is NYCC comfortable inviting significant incremental vehicle traffic to the impact area for a combined total of five years?

Conclusion

Growth is not easy under any circumstances. In Astoria, growth now presents itself in the form of vertical bulk, and now NYCC is charged with determining the type of future it wishes to bestow upon the neighborhood. As this document contends, too much growth in Astoria at once has the potential to stymie the forces that make Astoria attractive: affordable housing prices and rents, quality schools, unique businesses, and safe and reliable transit when system conditions permit. Considering the proposed action in the narrow context of the two project area blocks risks sacrificing future development opportunities where NYCC can leverage the needs of the entire neighborhood to request increased educational and transit resources from the City and State.

The strategic objectives of NYCC are, by nature, subjective to the composition of its members, as well as prevailing public sentiment. Existing zoning regulations, however, are clearly working as intended up and down 31st St.; there is no reason to think they are inadequate in this case. NYCC is strongly encouraged to ask itself whether the applicants have met their standards for approving additional bulk in a neighborhood that is already demonstrably at or above infrastructure capacity.

As part of the hearings so far, we have heard from CB1 residents: 162 of 225 signatures on a petition opposing this effort were recognized as being from "...within the impact area" at the 9/21 full board meeting of CB1. In contrast, the same meeting recognized that only 8 of 450 signatures in favor were located within the project impact zone. (Queens Community Board 1, 2021). NYCC is encouraged to take this disparity into consideration before it votes.

In this case, NYCC is encouraged to fulfill its duty by rejecting the proposed zoning and text amendments. In its ULURP comments, NYCC should urge the mayor to push back as well and request the applicants to come back to the table with proposals that are more in line with the character of the neighborhood where they feel rezoning is warranted. Alternatively, NYCC can reject and request another Department of Community Planning assessment to consider the entire neighborhood at large and request additional City and State resources as appropriate. Given the time allotted to presenting their proposals, the applicants bear the onus of explaining why the neighborhood needs development beyond its existing character. By a vote of 25-4, this was clear to the members of CB1 that the applicants failed to clear this threshold. It should also be clear to the members if the Land Use Committee and the larger City Council.

Special Thanks

Thank you to Community Liaison Frank Perez of the City Council, as well as the staff of Councilmember Tiffany Cabán.

From the office of the Borough President, the author thanks Borough President Donovan Richards and his staff for their time and consideration in reviewing this document. Additionally, the author also wishes to thank Vicky Garvey of the executive staff for her patience and assistance answering questions during the preparation of this response.

Special thanks as well to Florence Kourlouris and the members of Queens Community Board 1 for their help and support.

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Good Morning City Council Members,

The purposed rezoning for development on 31st Street and Hoyt Avenue is yet another affront to everything that is beneficial for Astoria. As someone who lives directly behind the purposed rezoning, I am disgusted. It is yet another case of a developer placing profits before the integrity of the neighborhood. This project is billed “to reinvigorate” the area, but if you are from this exact area, you will know it is in fact, quite active. I walk down 31st and Hoyt DAILY and it is far from desolate.

Is the developer here to make sure Astoria retains the people focused -human scaled, green streets and the quality of life it has always had? Or are these rezonings here exclusively to pack more and more people into our trains, pack out and overflow our sewer system, pack out our schools, overwhelm our already stressed energy grid and over burden existing infrastructure? We can't keep pretending these sham affordable housing developments are either affordable or beneficial for Astoria. **How can we continue to pack out the neighborhood without any changes to infrastructure knowing fully well that the environment cannot handle it? - Is almost criminal.**

Please honestly ask yourself – what true value does this project add to the *people of Astoria*? **What real value does this rezoning which solely will bring MORE UNITS bring to the neighborhood? How many of these units are actually affordable? Or does this rezoning only value the developer?** Does this scale even match what is around it? Can we add to the **community** while not destroying the character of the community? **Can we deliver much needed services while still respecting the integrity of the area? Yes we can.** We can **easily** have HANAC, day care centers, and shops WITHOUT this rezone. This is not a this-or-that, it **can** be both and we should demand both because we need both. **Please ask yourself, who benefits from this rezoning especially** When the current zoning already allows for large developments.

As someone who would be directly affected by these zoning law changes and who lives on 32nd st, **and who does NOT own a home here**, I ask you to please vote **for the people of Astoria** and against this zoning change. **We can develop without creating tax abated mega structures in residential areas.** We cannot continue to dump 8-10-12- story buildings into 2 and 3 story residential areas. If you will not listen to the residents of Astoria who will be directly impacted, **then who will listen to us? You will most likely hear from people in favor of this project. Please focus on the fact that NONE OF THEM LIVE HERE. Woodside, Queensbridge, Corona, these areas are far from the proposed rezoning.** As someone who lives directly in front of one of the empty lots, this rezoning and subsequent development will have a negative impact on hundreds of homes and families for years to come for the community.

The residents have overwhelmingly come out against this rezoning including signing a petition garnering hundreds of signatures from locals. The developer also created a petition where out of 400 signatures only a small handful even lived in Astoria, let alone the state. Shady to say the least.

This is the Future of Astoria we're looking at, and as a resident I am telling you that this rezoning will harm this area of Astoria. Please vote no to this rezoning just as the community board resoundingly did 25 to 4 just a few weeks ago and **yes to representing the interests of the community. There is no need to rezone to move forward.**

Thank you,

Laura Picallo

From: [Nakeah George](#)
To: [Land Use Testimony](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] 31st Street and Hoyt Avenue Rezoning (Important)
Date: Thursday, December 2, 2021 10:38:43 AM

Good Morning Everyone,

I hope everyone is doing well. My name is Nakeah George and I am a Community advocate for Woodside Houses in Queens.

Today I would like to explain to you the importance of why I fully support the proposed zoning map amendment and zoning text amendment to facilitate new mixed use developments on 31st street in Community District 1, Queens.

The proposed developments would include over 375 dwelling units, out of those 375 dwellings, 100 of those units will be made permanently affordable. As mentioned earlier all 100 new affordable housing units, rents will be significantly less than the market rates for comparable units throughout the entire neighborhood.

Additionally, allowing this change would ignite the birth of several new commercial locations to be developed and opened. Allowing commercial spaces to evolve will provide new career opportunities for everyone to access within the community.

This zoning change has so many benefits for public use. Additionally this zoning change will beautify the section of 31st Streets corridor. To be plainly honest, this area has been underdeveloped and rather neglected for many many years. This portion of 31st Street, as opposed to other portions of 31st Street, is much less attractive and less active. As a woman I would not want to walk down this corridor alone, at anytime of the day, but especially night time. What I am trying to say is this portion of 31 street needs a face lift. The current dark and dangerous street will be reactivated filled with light in abundance providing a fresh new heartbeat to Astoria giving it a place of life and resilience.

I am in full support of the proposed rezoning and I ask that everyone involved wether for or against to look deeper and look at the good in this proposal. We will all benefit, once we all come together. I hope as you listen to my words you understand the importance of all of us taking this next step together to develop our community.

Thank you for your time, your patience and your consideration with this matter.

Good Day,

Nakeah George

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: [Trilivas, Steven E](#)
To: [Land Use Testimony](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Written Opposition to 31st Hoyt Development
Date: Thursday, December 2, 2021 9:53:37 AM
Attachments: [32nd Street Homeowners Association.pdf](#)

Dear Speaker Johnson,

My name is Steven Trilivas – I am a resident of 32nd street in Astoria whose property is directly on the property line of the 2nd (and largest) proposed development seeking approval from the City Council tomorrow. I also have voluntarily taken the mantle of representing the elderly residents on my block who are in steep opposition to this project. The residents of 32nd Street opined our concerns to the Community Board, resulting in a massive local mandate to disapprove this development. We also showed up to the QBP open forum and expressed our concerns. The only voices that expressed support did not live in the area. Here are two links that summarized the bifurcation showing local residents impacted by the development being extremely opposed to the development – with the only voices of support being the developers and the non-local voices they could bring to the QBP open forum:

<https://astoriapost.com/borough-president-approves-neptune-diner-rezoning-despite-local->

[opposition](#)

<https://astoriapost.com/rezoning-proposal-for-neptune-diner-site-gets-thumbs-down-from-astoria-community-board>

Please note that since the news of this project surfaced several months ago – many residents have already sold their homes out of fear of the lingering impacts on the community – **including the parents of Luis Alvarez – the parents of the 9/11 first responder who got sick and passed from his service despite years of beseeching Congress for politicians to not leave these heroes behind.**

Unfortunately – local residents just found out about the meeting an hour ago – many cannot attend due to work or other concerns. I will be on for an hour due to work commitments – however I am not sure if that will even allow me to voice the concerns of my family as well as the elderly residents who will be directly impacted by this. Other voices who have taken a leadership role to oppose this development have not been able to be reached due to the fact we just found out about this meeting. That being said – I am sure the developers knew this was coming for a significant amount of time – and will roll through their lengthy presentation for the city council.

I am also attaching a formal written letter expressing the concerns that led to the Community Board overwhelmingly voting against this project.

I am asking you help to support the voices of the local Astoria community who do not want this

development to ruin our neighborhood, and the quality of life we currently enjoy.

Below is a copy of verbiage I formally sent to the community board (I have the original letter attached).

A Letter from the Homeowners of 32nd Street and 24th Road Regarding Proposed Development on STAPLES site

To whom it may concern,

My name is Steven Trilivas, I am the owner and resident of 24-40 32nd Street Astoria, NY 11102. I am writing on behalf of my

household as well as my neighbors who have expressed a great deal of concern with regards to the proposed developments on

31st Street – in particular the site off of 24th road (the current Staples building). I also want to let it be known that while I was

present on the Zoom meeting of 9/1/21 – most of my neighbors are retirees and/or pensioners and do not have the ability to

participate in these conversations via the computer. There was no formal notification of any of these projects given to the

neighborhood by the contractor and those residents who are aware became so via word of mouth. The general consensus is

extremely negative based upon what the residents feel the development will yield in terms of their quality of life in the near

term, as well as their property values.

I appreciate you giving us the opportunity to discuss the matter with the community board, and wanted to lay out certain issues

that were of paramount concern with the proposed project – though this list is not necessarily exhaustive:

Structural Integrity of the Buildings along 32nd Street - The proposed structure being discussed as of last week is

12 stories – which will require most likely the installation of piles to support the superstructure – the process of

installing the needed support will likely cause a significant amount of seismic activity which can damage the foundations of the houses. Please keep in mind that the houses on 32nd street were constructed in the

1930s and are

susceptible to significant damage due to vibrations and other construction activity. The residents of 32nd street want to

ensure that any proposed project does not cause any damage to their properties – Similar projects along 31st street have

caused structural damage to residential houses where the owners were not compensated and measures were not taken to

remediate the damages. In addition there is great concern that other infrastructure – existing drainage, piping, etc will

be damaged during the process of construction.

Staples exterior wall on the property line of the 32nd street homes – Currently the exterior wall of the existing

Staples building is on the property line of the homes on 32nd street off of 24th road – in order to proceed with the project as discussed – it is assumed that there will be a great amount of disruption required to demolish the existing site – and this will cause damage to the current backyards of the homeowners – and will generate a significant amount of inconvenience in terms of the ability to use their outdoor space due to safety concerns – and/or contractors requesting to gain access to the private space for demolition/construction purposes. Several homeowners have shown significant resistance and concern about letting any contractors on their property to facilitate demolition and construction. See picture attached demonstrating how the current Staples exterior wall sits on the residents property line

Parking & Traffic - Several residents have expressed concern with regards to the impact building several hundred residential units on our property line will have on the ability to park their vehicles and engage in their day to day lives without significant traffic disruption – as mentioned previously, a number of residents are elderly and often go back and forth to doctors appointments and the like. Have traffic studies been performed on how this project will impact the neighborhood?

Noise/Dust/Air Pollution – Significant concern has been expressed regarding the noise, and debris/dust that will be generated from the construction – which is assumed to last a number of years – significantly impacting the quality of life of the residents of 32nd street

Disruption of Light/Current View – Residents are concerned the project – one in particular that is so large - will have an adverse effect on the amount of light that the homes will receive – and also in general will disrupt the pleasant views we currently enjoy.

I look forward to the discussion and thank you for giving us a forum.

Sincerely,

Steven Trilivas

President of the 32nd Street Homeowners Association

Steve Trilivas

(917) 647-2152

The contents of this message, together with any attachments, are intended only for the use of the person(s) to which they are addressed and may contain confidential and/or privileged information. Further, any medical information herein is confidential and protected by law. It is unlawful for unauthorized persons to use, review, copy, disclose, or disseminate confidential medical information. If you are not the intended recipient, immediately advise the sender and

delete this message and any attachments. Any distribution, or copying of this message, or any attachment, is prohibited.

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I appreciate you giving us the opportunity to discuss the matter with the community board, and wanted to lay out certain issues that were of paramount concern with the proposed project – though this list is not necessarily exhaustive:

- **Structural Integrity of the Buildings along 32nd Street** - The proposed structure being discussed as of last week is 12 stories – which will require most likely the installation of piles to support the superstructure – the process of installing the needed support will likely cause a significant amount of seismic activity which can damage the foundations of the houses. Please keep in mind that the houses on 32nd street were constructed in the 1930s and are susceptible to significant damage due to vibrations and other construction activity. The residents of 32nd street want to ensure that any proposed project does not cause any damage to their properties – Similar projects along 31st street have caused structural damage to residential houses where the owners were not compensated and measures were not taken to remediate the damages. In addition there is great concern that other infrastructure – existing drainage, piping, etc will be damaged during the process of construction.
- **Staples exterior wall on the property line of the 32nd street homes** – Currently the exterior wall of the existing Staples building is on the property line of the homes on 32nd street off of 24th road – in order to proceed with the project as discussed – it is assumed that there will be a great amount of disruption required to demolish the existing site – and this will cause damage to the current backyards of the homeowners – and will generate a significant amount of inconvenience in terms of the ability to use their outdoor space due to safety concerns – and/or contractors requesting to gain access to the private space for demolition/construction purposes. Several homeowners have shown significant resistance and concern about letting any contractors on their property to facilitate demolition and construction. See picture attached demonstrating how the current Staples exterior wall sits on the residents property line
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- **Disruption of Light/Current View** – Residents are concerned the project – one in particular that is so large - will have an adverse effect on the amount of light that the homes will receive – and also in general will disrupt the pleasant views we currently enjoy.

I look forward to the discussion and thank you for giving us a forum.

Sincerely,



Steven Trilivas

President of the 32nd Street Homeowners Association