

NYBG

May 4, 2021

**Re: Arthur Avenue Hotel Rezoning
ULURP Nos. 210027ZMX, 210028ZRX**

Chair Moya and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of The New York Botanical Garden, I express our enthusiastic support for the referenced rezoning, which would allow for the development of a new hotel and residential building on a property bounded by Arthur Avenue, East 188th Street and Hughes Avenue in the Belmont section of the Bronx.

NYBG is now celebrating our 130th anniversary as an anchor institution in Bronx. We are a major employer of Bronx residents, an educator of youth and adults, a major tourist engine, and a world-wide scientific research institution – but our home has been, and always will be, this corner of the Bronx. As we kick off AAPI month, NYBG is proud to host Yayoi Kusama's *Cosmic Nature* exhibition, which is already filling the seats of our neighborhood businesses.

We also share this neighborhood with some rather remarkable neighbors: the Bronx Zoo, Fordham University, St. Barnabas Hospital, and the residents and businesses of Arthur Avenue. Together we make up a rather unique neighborhood ecosystem that people value and visit, even during a global pandemic.

It is our understanding that the proposed rezoning would facilitate the development of two new buildings, including a 13-story hotel with 146 guest rooms on Arthur Avenue and a 7-story, 56-unit residential building located on Hughes Avenue. Lined with shops, restaurants, and markets, Arthur Avenue is a vibrant cultural and culinary destination that has earned the title of the Bronx's "Little Italy." As you may know, there is a lack of quality full-service hotels throughout the Bronx and extremely limited hotel options near the Belmont neighborhood. Arthur Avenue is, however, a strategic location for a hotel, given its location in the heart of Little Italy and proximity to the academic and cultural attractions that welcome people from around the corner and across the globe.

We also need workforce housing in our neighborhood that is affordable to the MTA worker, the public school teacher, the police officer, and the DC37 horticulture staff or zookeeper and their families.

As one of these neighborhood institutions, we encourage this committee and the City Council to join the chorus of support the proposed rezoning has gathered thus far. As NYC recovers from the pandemic, we believe neighborhoods like ours – with its vibrant cultural offerings – will be a catalyst for local and citywide economic recovery. NYC is defined by our neighborhoods, our vibrant cultural institutions, and diversity of people and businesses. A project such as the one proposed would only enhance this unique ecosystem in the Bronx while aiding our residential neighbors and small business with additional economic activity.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Respectfully submitted,



Aaron Bouska
Vice President for Government and Community Relations
The New York Botanical Garden
abouska@nybg.org

NYC Council
Committee on Land Use
Re: Arthur Avenue Hotel Rezoning ULURP Nos. 210027ZMX, 210028ZRX

May 3, 2021

NYC Council Members:

On behalf of SBH Health System, we are writing to express our support for the above-referenced rezoning, which will facilitate the development of a new hotel and residential building on a property bounded by Arthur Avenue, East 188th Street and Hughes Avenue, in the Belmont neighborhood.

It is our understanding that the proposed rezoning would facilitate the development of two new buildings, including a 13-story hotel with 146 guest rooms on Arthur Avenue and a 7-story 56-unit residential building located on Hughes Avenue. Both projects will add necessary parking slots. The project design is in keeping with neighborhood preferences.

As a part of the Belmont community, we foresee potential benefits to the residents, hospital workers and visitors. Housing options and quality full service hotels are extremely few. The permanent housing would provide an additional option to our staff.

The economic viability of our neighbor businesses and residents is important to our institution. Therefore, we support the rezoning required to develop this project.

Ninfa Segarra, JD
Senior Vice President Community & Government Affairs
Chief Diversity Officer
SBH Health System