

Brooklyn CB7 Land Use/Landmarks Committee
Meeting Date: August 4, 2020
(notes filed October 16, 2020)

Notes by: John Fontillas

737 4th Avenue – Totem Development
Brooklyn Block 652, Lots 1 and 7
Introductory Presentation

On August 4, 2020, the Land Use/Landmarks Committee conducted a Zoom call meeting that was well attended virtually. Approximately 50 board members, residents and other stakeholders called in to discuss Totem Development/Tucker Reed's proposal for 737 4th Ave. The site is currently occupied by a parking lot and (2) one story commercial buildings of which one contains a Dunkin' Donuts. The site is located one block west of the main entrance of Green-Wood Cemetery on 25th Street and sits above the 25th Street Subway Station on the R line.

Mr. Reed and his associates from Totem Development presented the scheme for the project, a 14 story, 127,825 gsf mixed use building containing 142 apartment units, of which 35 units will meet affordable housing requirements under the Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) program. Totem is applying for a ULURP change in the Zoning Map to convert the site from a M1-1D to R8A/C2-4 district and change in the Zoning Text to establish a MIH area on the site. The existing R8A district currently ends at 24th Street, one block north. Several larger mixed-use buildings have been recently constructed in the R8A district from 20th Street north. There is an existing 12 story hotel building on midblock of 4th Avenue between 25th and 26th Streets, catty-corner from the site. No residential uses are permitted on the site per current zoning.

Mr. Reed mentioned his company has reviewed research and data on Sunset Park's housing needs and the project is intended to respond to the Board's affordable housing goals developed over the past few years. He specifically referred to CB7's NYU Wagner Housing Study as useful information for his proposal. The Board has asked Totem to provide apartment units that are affordable to household incomes of 30% AMI as part of their mix of affordable units. The Board also asked Totem to consider creating family size units, with 2 or 3 BR configurations to address a significant housing need in the community. Fifth Avenue Committee will be Totem's non-profit partner in marketing the project.

Mr. Reed noted the project is required to provide an MTA subway access easement for a future elevator and off-street entry to the 25th St. Station. This easement removes several hundred square feet from the rentable area on the ground floor. He also stated that he agrees with the Board's preference to lease the street-level commercial storefronts to local neighborhood-oriented retailers at affordable rents, rather than to formula or chain retailers.

The discussion with the group focused on numbers of affordable units, possible rent structures, and unit sizes. There was discussion as to whether the building could be turned into a homeless shelter similar to what recently happened to the developments on 15th Street. Totem said it was unlikely due to the amount of effort put in to apply for a rezoning as well as the

project's value as an ongoing rental development versus selling the building to HPD. The number of parking spaces (45 will be provided) relative to the number of units was also discussed, with Totem saying they have heard from the community that additional spaces for residents in the neighborhood would be welcome. These parking spaces will be completely below grade accessed from a ramp on 25th Street.

The adjacent Lot 7 is not currently projected as part of this development. Totem stated that this one-story taxpayer building will remain in place due to a deli tenant's existing long-term lease at the corner. The zoning application will show an additional 41,525 gsf mixed use building to be built on this portion of the site in the future. Totem mentioned they hope to be certified by City Planning in September, with ULURP starting soon after.

Mr. Reed said that he has been very conscious of housing issues in the neighborhood and the timing of development projects over the past few years. He was willing to hold off submitting his development proposal until after the Industry City rezoning made its way through the land use review process, but his schedule was interrupted by the Covid-19 crisis. He would like to start the ULURP process now and offered to meet with residents to hear their concerns. The Board's Land Use Committee asked him to make another brief presentation to respond to questions in September or October, in addition to the required Public Hearing.