

MANHATTAN BOROUGH BOARD

RESOLUTION

RECOMMENDING CONDITIONAL DISAPPROVAL OF THE APPLICATION FOR ACTIONS RELATING TO THE ONE VANDERBILT DEVELOPMENT (C 150128 ZSM, C150129 ZSM and C 150130 ZSM), THE PROPOSED TEXT AMENDMENT CREATING A VANDERBILT CORRIDOR (N 150127 ZRM) AND A CITY MAP AMENDMENT (C 140440 MMM) TO DESIGNATE THE BLOCK OF VANDERBILT AVENUE BETWEEN EAST 42nd STREET AND EAST 43rd STREET A PUBLIC PLACE, UNLESS UNRESOLVED ISSUES ARE ADDRESSED

WHEREAS, The Department of City Planning (DCP) seeks a text amendment to the Zoning Resolution (N 150127 ZRM) to facilitate commercial development and pedestrian circulation and to allow greater opportunities for area landmarks to transfer unused development rights; and

WHEREAS, the proposed text amendment would create a five block Vanderbilt Corridor within the Grand Central Subdistrict of the Special Midtown District in which a new Special Permit for Grand Central Public Realm Improvement Bonus (Section 81-64) will be available that will allow buildings to achieve a floor area ratio (FAR) of 30.0 through the completion of significant improvements to the pedestrian or mass transit circulation network; and

WHEREAS, the proposed text amendment would also allow landmarks within the Grand Central Subdistrict to transfer unused development rights to receiving sites in the Vanderbilt Corridor to achieve an FAR on the receiving sites of up to 30.0; and

WHEREAS, the proposed text amendment would create a new special permit for transient hotels within the Vanderbilt Corridor to encourage the development of business oriented new hotels; and

WHEREAS, DCP seeks a City Map Amendment (C 140440 MMM) to designate the block of Vanderbilt Avenue between East 42nd and East 43rd Streets a Public Place; and

WHEREAS, Green 317 Madison, LLC seeks a special permit (C 150128 ZSM) to transfer development rights from a landmark building in order to facilitate construction of an approximately 1.3 million square foot mixed-use development called One Vanderbilt between East 42nd and East 43rd Streets, and Madison and Vanderbilt Avenues; and

WHEREAS, Green 317 Madison, LLC seeks a special permit pursuant to the proposed Section 81-641 of the Zoning Resolution (C 150129 ZSM) for a Grand Central Public Realm Improvement Bonus of 12.3 FAR; and

WHEREAS, Green 317 Madison, LLC seeks a special permit pursuant to the proposed Section 81-642 of the Zoning Resolution (C 150130 ZSM) for modification of street wall, curb cut, height and setback, and mandatory district plan element regulations; and

WHEREAS, the proposed off-site improvements include:

1. The creation of a Public Place on Vanderbilt Avenue to be used as a pedestrian plaza;
2. A new stair in the cellar of the Pershing Square Building that would connect the Grand Central subway station mezzanine with the Lexington Avenue line platform; and
3. A new subway entrance with two new street-level subway stairs on the sidewalk at the southeast corner of East 42nd Street and Lexington Avenue that would connect to and open an existing 4,100 square foot below-grade passageway; and
4. Modification of columns in the Grand Central subway mezzanine to provide more pedestrian circulation space and improve pedestrian flow; and
5. 8,475 square feet of expanded Grand Central subway mezzanine space in the cellar of the Grand Hyatt Hotel and the creation of two new stairs from the new mezzanine area to the platform; and
6. Replacement and widening of an existing street-level subway entrance at the northwest corner of Lexington Avenue and East 42nd Street; and

WHEREAS, the proposed on-site improvements would include:

1. A new subway entrance on East 42nd Street with escalator, elevator and stairways providing access to the shuttle subway station and providing below-grade connections through the Intermodal Connector to the 4, 5, 6, and 7 subway lines at the Grand Central Terminal concourse level and to the Long Island Rail Road at the East Side Access concourse level; and
2. a new 4,000 square foot "Transit Hall," with entrances at East 43rd Street, providing stairway and elevator connections to the new Intermodal Connector, with connections to East Side Access, the shuttle, Grand Central Terminal, and the 4, 5, 6, and 7 subway lines; and
3. new elevator and escalator connections from East Side Access through the development site that will allow for connection from the East Side Access concourse to street level or the 4, 5, 6, 7, or Shuttle subway lines; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Vanderbilt Corridor is located above the future concourse of the Long Island Railroad's East Side Access, which will be 50 feet below the buildings on the west side of Vanderbilt Avenue; and

WHEREAS, the Yale Club, the Roosevelt Hotel, and 52 Vanderbilt are located in the Vanderbilt Corridor, are considered eligible landmarks by the Landmark Preservation Commission (LPC), and would be put at greater risk of redevelopment by the proposed actions; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Public Place on Vanderbilt Avenue will generate bonus floor area for the One Vanderbilt development, but the scope of improvements to the space will not be determined until after approval of this application, nor has the applicant provided for the ongoing maintenance of this space; and

WHEREAS, more than half of the proposed One Vanderbilt's frontage on the proposed Vanderbilt Avenue Public Place will be taken up by a private office lobby; and


WHEREAS, concurrent with this application the East Midtown Steering Committee, co-chaired by Councilmember Dan Garodnick and Borough President Gale Brewer, is evaluating potential zoning changes and other planning issues in the wider East Midtown neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, Community Boards 5 and 6 approved resolutions recommending denial with conditions of all actions unless:

1. The text amendment is limited to sites for which the City and the MTA have a coordinated plan for improvements to the public realm; and
2. The text amendment provides guidelines for what type of improvements may merit a given FAR increase; and
3. The text amendment requires that any building granted a Grand Central Public Realm Improvement Bonus be designed to perform 30 percent better than ASHRAE 90.1, 2010; and
4. The East Midtown Steering Committee fully consider the five blocks between East 42nd and East 47th Street and Vanderbilt and Madison Avenues; and
5. The text amendment require the LPC to issue a letter in support of the harmonious relationship to the Grand Central Terminal for any proposed building; and
6. The text amendment be altered such that only sites fronting on two wide streets, overlooking Grand Central Terminal, adjacent to a subway station and with access to the Grand Central Terminal circulation system could merit the full 15 FAR bonus; and
7. The One Vanderbilt project achieve a LEED v4 Platinum certification; and
8. A major public space is created at street and concourse level, through or adjacent to and connecting with the main lobby of One Vanderbilt, and connecting the corner of Madison Avenue and East 42nd Street and the main concourse of Grand Central; and

WHEREAS, the two affected Community Boards additionally questioned many elements of the proposal including subway entrance placement, sidewalk widths, and the size of the proposed office lobbies;

THEREFORE, the Manhattan Borough Board recommends disapproval of ULURP numbers C 150128 ZSM, C150129 ZSM and C 150130 ZSM (One Vanderbilt Development), N 150127 ZRM (text amendment) and C 140440 MMM (City Map amendment) unless a responsible conclusion is reached on issues of public access and public space relating to the Grand Central Terminal circulation network, the environmental sustainability requirements of the proposed zoning text for the Vanderbilt Corridor, and the language of the zoning text relating to, and the method for, achieving significant FAR bonuses.


Gale A. Brewer

Manhattan Borough President
Chair of the Manhattan Borough Board