



**Community Board 12 - Manhattan
Washington Heights & Inwood**

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Shahabuddeen A. Ally, Esq., Chairperson
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March 31, 2017

Hon. Margery Perlmutter
Chair
New York City Board of Standards and Appeals
250 Broadway, 29th Floor
New York, New York 10007

RE: Resolution supporting the Application submitted to the Board of Standards and Appeals on behalf of the Inwood Academy for Leadership Charter School requesting a Special Permit to allow the school to operate at 3896 Tenth Avenue, NY, NY.

Dear Perlmutter:


At the General Meeting of Community Board 12 Manhattan held on Tuesday, March 28, 2017 the following resolution passed with a vote of 31 in favor, 1 opposed and 1 abstention supporting the Application submitted to the Board of Standards and Appeals on behalf of the Inwood Academy for Leadership Charter School requesting a Special Permit to allow the School to operate at 3896 Tenth Avenue.

- Whereas: An application (the "Application") was submitted to the Board of Standards and Appeals ("BSA") in February 2017 by Greenberg Traurig LLP ("Legal Counsel") on behalf of the Inwood Academy for Leadership Charter School ("Inwood Academy" or the "School") requesting a special permit (the "Special Permit") to allow a school to operate at the premises 3896 Tenth Avenue, Block 2223 / Lot 16 (the "Property"); and
- Whereas: The Property is an 18,082-square foot irregularly-shaped lot located at the southwest intersection of Isham Street and Tenth Avenue, and the northwest corner of Post Avenue and Tenth Avenue. It has approximately 68.96 feet of frontage on Isham Street, 20 feet of frontage on Post Avenue, and 158.71 feet of frontage on Tenth Avenue and is located within a C8-3 zoning district in which Use Group 3 uses, which includes schools, are not permitted as of right; and
- Whereas: The area west of the Property contains a mixture of commercial, residential, and transportation uses as well as several automotive and parking uses. A Metropolitan Transportation Authority train yard facility, i.e.: the 207th Street yard, and elevated train tracks are located to the east of the Property. Further west of the Property along West 207th Street, Isham Street, Sherman Avenue, and Post Avenue are a mix of two- to six - story buildings including multi-family walkup buildings and mixed commercial/residential buildings with ground floor retail in addition to one- or two-story commercial buildings. Retail uses within the area include delis, groceries, clothing stores and restaurants; and
- Whereas: The Property is improved with a 35,469-square foot, two-story building (the "Building") with a partial cellar. The Building was constructed in 1928 and was formerly used as an auto repair and body shop and a 195-space parking garage. If the Application is approved, the Building will be fully renovated to accommodate the Inwood Academy but will not be enlarged; and

- Whereas: Inwood Academy is a charter school founded by local community members in December 2009 with the stated mission of empowering students in Inwood and Washington Heights to become agents for change through community-focused leadership, character development and college preparedness. The School opened in August 2010 with approximately 110 5th grade students. Today, it includes Grades 5 to 11 and has a total enrollment of approximately 820 students - 500 middle school students (Grades 5 – 8) and 320 high school students (Grades 9 -11). The School's curriculum caters to the needs of individual students, whatever their requirements. Students not on a pathway to college may receive vocational training in addition to basic academic instruction. The School also focuses on students with special needs, some of whom are autistic, and most of whom require individualized instruction programs designed by a variety of support professionals working as a team; and
- Whereas: In the 2017-18 academic year, the School will add a 12th grade class, as the rising 11th graders move on to their final year in high school. A new classroom at the Middle School will provide for enlargement of the 5th grade class. The School expects a total enrollment of approximately 1,000 students (500 middle school students and 500 high school students). Seventy percent of the School's students are residents of Washington Heights and Inwood, and approximately 30% reside in the Bronx. Eighty five percent (85%) of the families whose children attend the School qualify for free or reduced-price school lunches. Inwood Academy has a waiting list of over 1,000 children; and
- Whereas: Inwood Academy currently occupies two buildings in Inwood. The existing high school (the "High School") is co-located with Good Shepherd School at 108 Cooper Street, at the corner of Cooper and Isham Streets, approximately .25 miles northwest of the Property. The High School occupies approximately 19,000 square feet of this 127,000-square foot facility. The Middle School is located at 433 West 204th Street, approximately four blocks south of the Property. The lease for the High School Facility will expire in 2017; a short extension is being negotiated. The School's headquarters, including offices for executive administration, corporate finance, development, admissions, and accounting, are located at the High School; and
- Whereas: The High School facility lacks the number of classrooms needed to accommodate four grades of high school, and also does not contain adequate space for physical education classes, science labs and vocational training areas. A new high school facility (the "New High School") is required to accommodate the addition of 12th grade students given the limited space available at the existing high school facility and the pending expiration of the lease the facility at Cooper Street; and
- Whereas: During the past year 144 potential sites, including sites in Washington Heights, Harlem and the Bronx, were reviewed and considered for expansion of the Inwood Academy. Of the sites evaluated, 87 were located in commercial or residential districts where the use was as-of-right. The main disqualifying factors were the prohibitively high cost per square foot, the lack of immediately available space, and buildings with awkward floor plates/layouts and/or inadequate size for the School's programmatic requirements. Other sites were rejected because the owner was not interested in leasing to an educational institution, or the desired space was leased to, or in contract with, another tenant. Inaccessibility to public transportation was a principal disqualifying factor for some sites; and
- Whereas: The Property is an ideal location for expansion of the Inwood Academy because it is located just four blocks away from the existing Middle School and is easily accessible to public transportation. The New High School will be the sole occupant of the Property and will house approximately five hundred students in Grades 9 through 12 and approximately fifty-five staff on two floors of approximately 35,264 square feet of total floor area, nearly doubling the space currently available to the High School; and

- Whereas: The New High School has been designed to accommodate the Inwood Academy's programmatic needs. Alterations to the Property will include rehabilitation of the Building's exterior envelope with repairs to the existing walls, installation of new windows and new entrance/exit doors, a new canopy, infill of wall openings that will not be used and installation of a new roof. Interior improvements will include the construction of three new egress stairs and one elevator, the installation of new interior wall surfaces with drywall and the installation of mineral wool insulation between dry wall and existing masonry to improve acoustical attenuation. Interior partitions made of concrete masonry, and finished with metal studs and drywall will be used to create classrooms, special purpose rooms, cafeteria, administrative offices and common areas such as corridors, the lobby and toilet facilities. Existing plumbing, mechanical, electrical and fire protection systems will be replaced to meet the requirements of the New High School's use. The existing floors will be leveled and structural support will be provided around the new openings for the elevator shaft and stairs; and
- Whereas: On March 8, 2017, the Application was presented to the Land Use Committee ("Land Use" or the "Committee") by representatives of Legal Counsel, Inwood Academy, and its architectural and environmental consulting professionals; and
- Whereas: In September 2010 Community Board 12-Manhattan passed a resolution requesting the Department of City Planning ("DCP") rezone the C-3 zoning districts in Washington Heights and Inwood. To-date, DCP has failed to act on this request; now, therefore, be it
- Resolved: Community Board 12-Manhattan supports the Application submitted to the Board of Standards and Appeals on behalf of the Inwood Academy for Leadership Charter School requesting a Special Permit to allow the School to operate at 3896 Tenth Avenue, New York, NY.

Sincerely



Shahid Uddeen A. Ally, Esq.
Chairperson

cc: Hon. Ryan Singer, AICP Executive Director
Hon. Andrew Cuomo, Governor
Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
Hon. Letitia James, Public Advocate
Hon. Scott M. Stringer, Comptroller
Hon. Gale Brewer, Borough President
Inwood Academy for Leadership

Hon. Adriano Espaillat, Congressman
Hon. Bill Perkins, State Senator
Hon. Marisol Alcantara, State Senator
Hon. Herman D. Farrell, Jr., Assembly Member
Hon. Ydanis Rodriguez, Council Member
Hon. Mark Levine, Council Member
Greenberg Traurig, LLP