

Report

Concerning the Determination of

the Proposed

OCEAN AVENUE SOUTH

STUDY AREA

as

“An Area in Need of Rehabilitation”

**The original of this report was signed and sealed
in accordance with N.J.S.A. 40:14A-12**

September 24, 2015



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I. SURVEY OF CONDITIONS IN THE STUDY AREA

A. Introduction

The Municipal Council of the City of Jersey City, on December 17, 2014, adopted resolutions number 14-791, authorizing the Jersey City Planning Board to:

1. Conduct a preliminary investigation of the physical and economic conditions of an area known as the Ocean Avenue South Study Area, (hereinafter the Study Area) to determine whether or not this Study Area meets the statutory criteria necessary to be declared an “area in need of redevelopment,” as a “non-condemnation redevelopment area,” or as an “area in need of rehabilitation” as outlined in NJSA 40A:12A-5, NJSA 40A:12A-6, and 40A:12A-14;
2. Propose a Redevelopment Plan for this Study Area if it is found to be in Need of Redevelopment and/or Rehabilitation.

B. Boundary Description

The Ocean Avenue South Study Area contains 21 acres and 115 individual parcels stretching from Merritt Street to Cator Avenue along Ocean Avenue.

BLOCK	LOTS
28204	24, 25, 26, 27
28701	30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35
28702	10, 11
28802	1, 44, 45, 46 47
29301	17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25
29302	22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31
29303	17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24
29304	22
29401	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14
29402	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 49, 50, 51
29403	1, 2
29404	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
30001	1, 2 3, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22
30002	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
30003	21, 22
30101	1, 2, 3, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37

The boundary of the Study Area is also depicted on Map 1, “Study Area Boundary Map.” In the event of a discrepancy between lots listed in the chart and the Map, the Map takes precedence.

C. Local Setting and Background

The Study Area is located in the southeast portion of Greenville in Jersey City, adjacent to the municipal border with the City of Bayonne. The area straddles Ocean Avenue and is bounded by Cator Avenue to the north and Merritt Avenue to the south. Nearly all lots in the study area front upon Ocean Avenue. Historically, this portion of Ocean Avenue existed as a main street and has functioned as a mixed-use commercial district for well over 100 years. Today, the area is zoned R-1 (one- and two-family residential) and is a mix of commercial, residential and some industrial uses.

In the 1960's and 70's, Jersey City experienced some of the worst decades in its history, as much of the City's population fled to newer suburbs, and most neighborhoods experienced significant economic and social decline. Older commercial corridors including the Study Area suffered greatly. Not only were there were less people to frequent local stores but auto-oriented development patterns, like Route 440 and Newport Mall, encouraged residents to shop outside of his or her neighborhood. In response, in 1974 the City rezoned many older commercial corridors including Ocean Avenue to be residential in order to combat the decreased demand for neighborhood commercial. In the decades since Ocean Avenue was rezoned, there have been a few one- or two-family homes built in stark contrast to the historic mixed-use nature of the corridor. In large part the Study Area still functions as a mixed-use commercial district.

The Study Area shows signs of stagnation and lack of investment. Some lots are vacant and under-utilized. Several buildings are fully dilapidated and uninhabitable. Other buildings are in disrepair while some of the buildings are in good condition. The generality of structures in the Study Area, however, have come to exhibit an obvious lack of maintenance and disrepair which acts as a disincentive for investment both within and beyond the Study Area.

Today, many older commercial corridors are experiencing an economic resurgence. Nationally, shopping habits are trending toward a neighborhood scale enabling residents to walk to most daily needs and amenities. By revisiting the zoning of the corridor, Ocean Avenue South may be better positioned for the future.

D. Transportation Access

The Study Area has excellent vehicular access. It fronts on Ocean Avenue, a major north-south thoroughfare in Jersey City. Route 440 is located just the south of the Study Area accessible from Avenue C. Also to the south is access to the Turnpike via Exit 14A, just over a half mile drive.

The Area also has many mass transit options. It is serviced by several bus lines since a major bus servicing terminal is located at Gates Avenue and Old Bergen Road in the Study Area. These buses run to Journal Square and Downtown Jersey City, providing direct access to the PATH line and the bus terminal at the Journal Square Transportation Center. Local bus service, as well as bus service into New York City, is also available along Kennedy Boulevard just to the west of the Study Area. In addition, the Danforth Hudson-Bergen Light Rail Station is located just over a quarter mile from the Study

Area. The Light Rail Line runs north-south stretching from Bayonne to North Bergen. This Light Rail Line provides access to local stops within Jersey City, as well as connections with the PATH line, the Hoboken NJT Train Station and numerous bus lines.

E. Physical Survey and Analysis

E.1. Physical Survey Methodology - The following methods were used in gathering information and preparing a physical condition survey of the Study Area.

A. The area was visually inspected and photographed on Thursday, April 23, 2015 as shown in Exhibit B of this document.

B. A certification of the state of the water and sewer infrastructure for the Study Area was requested from the Jersey City Municipal Utilities Authority to determine the state of repair of utilities in the area, as confirmed in Exhibit A of this document.

E.2. Study Area Characteristics

The Study Area along Ocean Avenue from Cator Avenue to Merritt Street consists of 115 Tax Lots found on 16 Tax Blocks as well as the right-of-way for adjoining streets, equaling 21 acres in total. The Study Area includes a range of buildings types and land uses. There is a residential high rise, one- and two-family homes, historically significant structures, several churches, and an old movie theater that operates as a drug store.

In terms of infrastructure and services, more than 50% of the water and sewage infrastructure of the Study Area is at least 50 years old, and the water and sewage utilities in the area are in need of repair or substantial maintenance, as certified in a Aug. 21, 2015 letter from the Jersey City Municipal Utilities Authority (Exhibit A of this document).

II. CRITERIA FOR DETERMINATION OF NEED FOR REHABILITATION

The Study Area may be determined to be in an area need of rehabilitation if, after investigation, notice and hearing, as provided within NJSA 40A:12A-14, the governing body concludes by resolution that within the study area, any of the following conditions are found:

a. A delineated area may be determined to be in need of rehabilitation if the governing body of the municipality determines by resolution that a program of rehabilitation, as defined in section 3 of P.L.1992, c.79 (C.40A:12A-3), may be expected to prevent further deterioration and promote the overall development of the community; and that there exist in that area any of the following conditions such that (1) a significant portion of structures therein are in a deteriorated or substandard condition; (2) more than half of the housing stock in the delineated area is at least 50 years old; (3) there is a pattern of vacancy, abandonment or underutilization of properties in the area; (4) there is a persistent arrearage of property tax payments on properties in the area; (5) environmental contamination is discouraging improvements and investment in properties

in the area; or (6) a majority of the water and sewer infrastructure in the delineated area is at least 50 years old and is in need of repair or substantial maintenance.

b. A delineated area shall be deemed to have been determined to be an area in need of rehabilitation in accordance with the provisions of this act if it has heretofore been determined to be an area in need of rehabilitation pursuant to P.L.1975, c.104 (C.54:4-3.72 et seq.), P.L.1977, c.12 (C.54:4-3.95 et seq.) or P.L.1979, c.233 (C.54:4-3.121 et al.).

c. (1) A municipality may adopt an ordinance declaring a renovation housing project to be an area in need of rehabilitation for the purposes of Article VIII, Section I, paragraph 6 of the New Jersey Constitution if the need for renovation resulted from conflagration.

(2) For the purposes of this subsection, "renovation housing project" means any work or undertaking to provide a decent, safe, and sanitary dwelling, to exclusively benefit a specific household, by the renovation, reconstruction, or replacement of the household's home on the same lot by either a charitable entity organized to perform home renovations or by a for-profit builder using 75% or more volunteer labor-hours to accomplish the construction for the project. The undertaking may include any buildings; demolition, clearance, or removal of buildings from land; equipment; facilities; or other personal properties or interests therein which are necessary, convenient, or desirable appurtenances of the undertaking.

d. (1) A municipality may adopt an ordinance declaring a renovation housing project to be an area in need of rehabilitation for the purposes of Article VIII, Section I, paragraph 6 of the New Jersey Constitution if at least half of the number of people occupying the dwelling as their primary residence qualify for a federal income tax credit pursuant to 26 U.S.C. s.22 as a result of being permanently and totally disabled and the improvements to be made to the dwelling are made substantially to accommodate those disabilities.

(2) For the purposes of this subsection, "renovation housing project" means any work or undertaking to provide a decent, safe, and sanitary single-family dwelling, to exclusively benefit at least half of the number of people occupying a dwelling as their primary residence, by the renovation, reconstruction, or replacement of that dwelling on the same lot by either a charitable entity organized to perform home renovations or by a for-profit builder using 75% or more volunteer labor-hours to accomplish the construction for the project. The undertaking may include any buildings; demolition, clearance, or removal of buildings from land; equipment; facilities; or other personal properties or interests therein which are necessary, convenient, or desirable appurtenances of the undertaking.

III. CONCLUSION

A review of the unique characteristics of the Study Area indicates that it qualifies as an "Area in Need of Rehabilitation" as defined in NJSA 40A:12A-14; meeting the criteria of subsection a(6).

Subsection "a(6)" speaks to the state of the water and sanitation infrastructure of the area, both in terms of age and state of repair. Under a(6), an area is classified as in need of rehabilitation when "a majority of the water and sewer infrastructure in the delineated area is at least 50 years old and is in need of repair or substantial maintenance." In exhibit A, the Jersey City Municipal Utilities authority has determined that the Study Area falls under this condition, and that a program of rehabilitation would rejuvenate water and sanitation assets and prevent further deterioration of these systems.

We conclude that the conditions of Criterion "a(6)" are met.

It is the recommendation of City Planning staff that the aforementioned Study Area be determined as an "area in need of rehabilitation" without the authorization to use eminent domain, as it qualifies for such a determination under subsection a(6) of NJSA 40A:12A-14.

Prepared by :



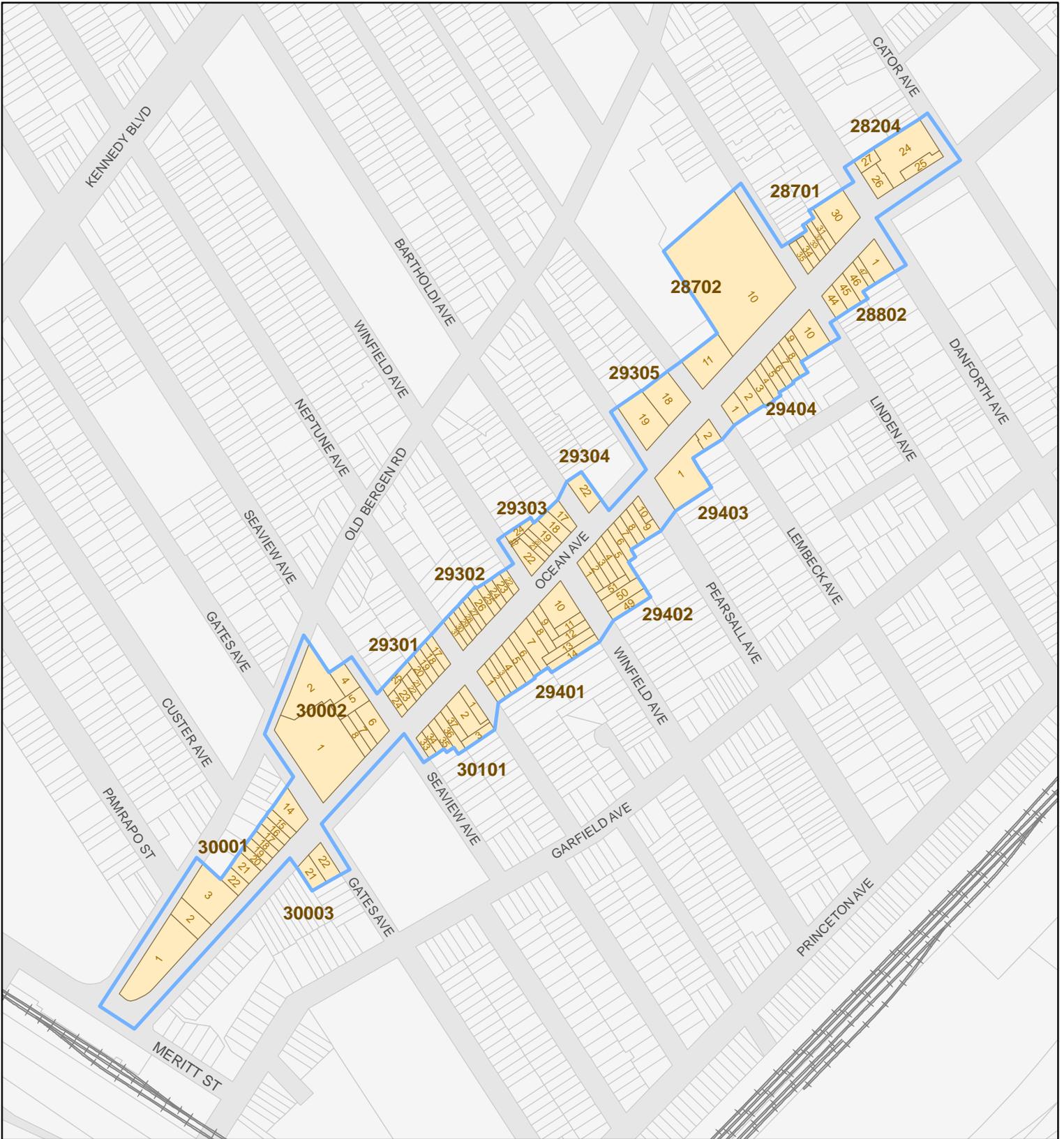
Robert D. Cotter, PP, FAICP
Director, City Planning Division



Matt Ward, AICP, PP
Senior Planner



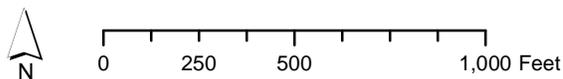
Willow Latham
Planner



OCEAN AVENUE SOUTH STUDY AREA
 MAP 1: STUDY AREA BOUNDARY MAP

AUGUST 5, 2015

1 inch = 500 feet



Jersey City
City Planning Division
 30 Montgomery Street Suite 1400
 Jersey City, NJ 07302-3821
 Phone: 201.547.5010
 Fax: 201.547.4323

Exhibit "A"
Letter from JCMUA
(following page)



JERSEY CITY MUNICIPAL UTILITIES AUTHORITY

555 ROUTE #440 · JERSEY CITY, NEW JERSEY 07305 · TEL: (201) 432-1150 · FAX: (201) 432-1576

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Aug. 21, 2015

Robert D. Cotter, PP, AICP
Jersey City Planning Director
30 Montgomery St., Suite 1400
Jersey City, NJ. 07302

RE: JERSEY CITY PLANNING DIVISION
OCEAN AVENUE SOUTH STUDY AREA

Dear Mr. Cotter:

This letter is to certify that more than 50% of the water and sewer infrastructure in the area delineated on the attached map is at least 50 years old. The water and sewer utilities in this area are in need of repair or substantial maintenance. A program of rehabilitation would rejuvenate these assets, prevent further deterioration of these systems, and promote overall development of this community.

Please contact me if you need any additional information.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rajiv Prakash".

Rajiv Prakash, PE

cc: Daniel Becht, Esq. Executive Director

Exhibit "B"

Photos of the Study Area

(photographed on Thursday, April 23, 2015)

Block 28802, Lot 1 (four pictures)



Block 28802, Lot 47



Block 28802, Lot 46



Block 28802, Lot 45



Block 28802, Lot 44



Block 29404, Lot 10



Block 29404, Lot 9



Block 29404, Lot 8



Block 29404, Lot 7



Block 29404, Lot 6



Block 29404, Lot 5



Block 29404, Lot 4



Block 29404, Lot 3



Block 29404, Lot 2



Block 29404, Lot 1



Block 29403, Lot 2



Block 29403, Lot 1



Block 29402, Lot 10



Block 29402, Lot 9 (two pictures)



Block 29402, Lot 8



Block 29402, Lot 7



Block 29402, Lot 6



Block 29402, Lot 5



Block 29402, Lot 4 (Taken on July23, 2015)



Block 29402, Lot 3



Block 29402, Lot 2 and 1



Block 29402, Lot 51



Block 29402, Lot 50 and 49 (two pictures)



Block 29401, Lot 14



Block 29401, Lot 13 and 12



Block 29401, Lot 11



Block 29401, Lot 10



Block 29401, Lot 10 (continued - four pictures)





Block 29401, Lot 9



Block 29401, Lot 8



Block 29401, Lot 7



Block 29401, Lot 6



Block 29401, Lot 5



Block 29401, Lot 4



Block 29401, Lot 3 and 2



Block 29401, Lot 1



Block 30101, Lot 3



Block 30101, Lot 1



Block 30101, Lot 2 (two pictures)



Block 30101, Lot 37



Block 30101, Lot 36, 35 and 34



Block 30101, Lot 33



Block 30003, Lot 22 (Taken on July23, 2015)



Block 30003, Lot 21 (Taken on July23, 2015)



Block 30001, Lot 14 (three pictures)



Block 30001, Lot 15



Block 30001, Lot 16



Block 30001, Lot 17



Block 30001, Lot 18



Block 30001, Lot 19



Block 30001, Lot 20



Block 30001, Lot 21



Block 30001, Lot 22



Block 30001, Lot 3 (four pictures)



Block 30001, Lot 2 (two pictures)



Block 30001, Lot 1 (six pictures)





Block 30002, Lot 1 (four pictures)



Block 30002, Lot 2



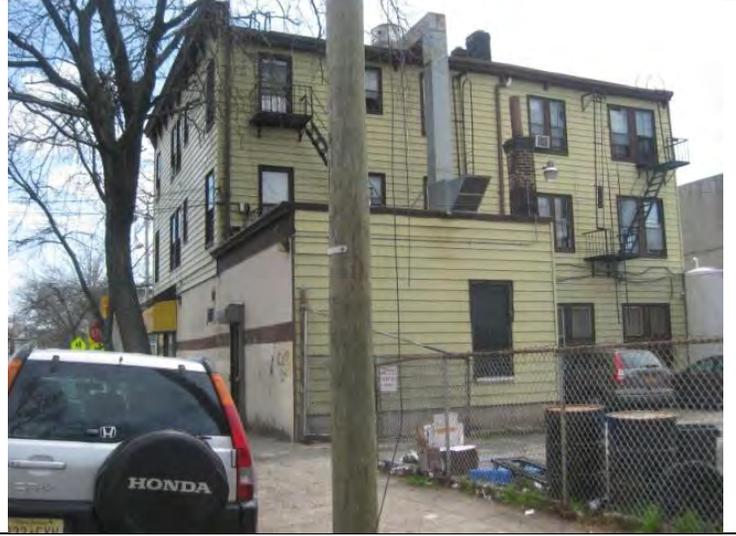
Block 30002, Lot 4 (two pictures)



Block 30002, Lot 5



Block 30002, Lot 6 (two pictures)



Block 30002, Lot 7



Block 30002, Lot 8



Block 29301, Lot 25



Block 29301, Lot 24



Block 29301, Lot 23



Block 29301, Lot 22



Block 29301, Lot 21



Block 29301, Lot 20



Block 29301, Lot 19



Block 29301, Lot 18



Block 29301, Lot 17



Block 29302, Lot 31 (four pictures)



Block 29302, Lot 30 (two pictures)



Block 29302, Lot 29 (two pictures)



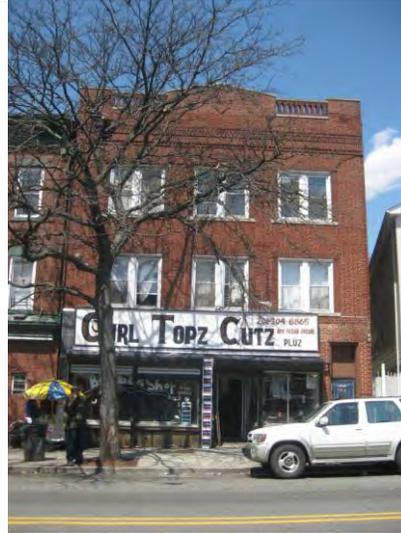
Block 29302, Lot 28 (two pictures)



Block 29302, Lot 27



Block 29302, Lot 26



Block 29302, Lot 25



Block 29302, Lot 24



Block 29302, Lot 23



Block 29302, Lot 22 (two pictures)



Block 29303, Lot 24 and 23 (two pictures)



Block 29303, Lot 22 (four pictures)





Block 29303, Lot 21 and 20



Block 29303, Lot 19



Block 29303, Lot 18



Block 29303, Lot 17



Block 29304, Lot 22 (three pictures)



Block 29305, Lot 19 (four pictures)





Block 29303, Lot 18 (two pictures)



Block 28702, Lot 11 (four pictures)





Block 28702, Lot 10 (six pictures)





Block 28701, Lot 35 (two pictures)



Block 28701, Lot 34



Block 28701, Lot 33



Block 28701, Lot 32



Block 28701, Lot 31



Block 28701, Lot 30 (four pictures)



Block 28204, Lot 27



Block 28204, Lot 26 (two pictures)



Block 28204, Lot 25 and 24 (two pictures)

