

# CITY OF JERSEY CITY

Department of Housing, Economic Development & Commerce  
Division of City Planning



Interdepartmental Memorandum

DATE: 5/15/2020 ***revised and reissued 6/12/2020***

TO: Historic Preservation Commission  
FROM: Margaret A. O'Neill, Historic Preservation Specialist

CC: Elizabeth Barna, Esq., HPC Counsel  
Division of City Planning Staff  
Susan McCann, Applicant  
/File

RE: Case #H20-083  
654 Bergen Ave A/K/A the former Jersey City YMCA  
Block: 16703, Lot 5  
West Bergen-East Lincoln Park Historic District

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## I. PLANS AND DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

1. Historic Preservation Application, submitted May 6th, 2020
2. Exhibit A entitled *Historic Plans and Elevations* submitted May 6th, 2020
3. Exhibit B entitled *NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission, 2016 Designation List Description: YMCA BUILDING, WEST 135th STREET BRANCH (built 1918-1919, John Jackson, Architect)* submitted May 6th 2020
4. Plans entitled *"REHABILITATION OF BERGENVIEW APARTMENTS - WINDOW REPLACEMENT ALONG BERGEN AVENUE 654 Bergen Ave Jersey City, NJ 07304"* submitted May 6th 2020 ***revised and resubmitted, dated 6/1/2020***
5. Revised window specifications, undated
6. Supplemental photos, undated

## II. PROJECT & PROPOSAL BACKGROUND

The property has been owned by New Hope Urban Renewal / The Community Builders (herein referred to as "The Owner") since June 5th, 1999. The building is the former Jersey City YMCA, a key-contributing building to the West Bergen-East Lincoln Park Historic District constructed in 1924. The property currently is used as an apartment building, containing 59 Single Room Occupancy units and 72 Studio units.

Per the submitted application and submitted specifications, the applicant is seeking a Certificate of Appropriateness for the removal of existing non-historic windows and the installation of non-conforming aluminum windows at the ground, first and second floors of the primary façade facing Bergen Ave at the former Jersey City YCMA, a key-contributing, altered, eight-story, nine-bay, Classical Revival building constructed in 1924.

The application and submitted plans were deemed complete by HPC Staff on

May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

### III. PROPERTY LOCATION & JURISDICTION

654 Bergen Ave (herein referred to as “The Property”) is located in the West Bergen-East Lincoln Historic District. The property is located on an oversized irregular lot (128.25 X 331.21) fronting Bergen Ave.

The property was individually listed on the NJ Register of Historic Places on September 29, 1999 and the National Register of Historic Places on November 12, 1999. The property was designated as a key-contributing building within the West Bergen-East Lincoln Park Historic District on June 15, 2015, on the State register of historic places on December 29, 2014, and on the National Register of Historic Places on July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016. The HPC’s jurisdiction regarding the property is defined per § 345-30, entitled *Historic Preservation Review Procedures*:

- a. *No permit shall be issued or amended nor shall any construction, **alteration**, minor alteration, ordinary maintenance and repair or demolition be started on a landmark building nor on any sign, building, structure, object, site or landscape feature within a designated historic district, whether or not a construction permit is required, prior to a filing of an application for review by the Historic Preservation Commission or the issuance of either a Certificate of Appropriateness or a Certificate of No Effect.*

Additionally, per 2(a), “*The Historic Preservation Officer shall refer all applications for new construction, **alterations**, relocation or demolition to the Historic Preservation Commission for review.*”

### IV. HISTORIC DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND FOR CONTEXT

*(From the National Register Nomination Form, prepared by Cynthia Rose Hamilton of Powers & Company Inc. Dated 3/12/1999)*

*Built in 1924, the Jersey City YMCA stands as an architectural and community landmark in Jersey City New Jersey and games its significance in the areas of architecture and social history and that’s meets national register criteria A and C. With associations and most urban communities in the nation the YMCA organization has received achieve nationwide recognition in promoting his mission of improving the mind, body, and spirit of its members, a goal that was established over a century and a half ago. Designed with permanence and tradition of mine, YMCA buildings have a chief stature and communities throughout the country, and typically represent variations on the classical styles. The organizations approach to establish a new associations relied on fundraising and community construction efforts drawn directly from the local community, a concert that instilled the sense of community ownership and add pride and essentially guaranteed long-term prosperity. The Jersey City YMCA has served its community in a multitude of capacities for over seven decades and is one of the cities most locally significant buildings.*

*Designed in the classical revival\Italian Renaissance style, the Jersey City YMCA conveys the sense of permanence and tradition that was intended by the organization and is representative of the style that was popular for civic and institutional buildings in the decade preceding the great depression. With his rusticated lime stone faced ground floor and classically framed windows punctuating the second floor. The building bares a resemblance to the architecture of the Italian Renaissance Period. The interior spaces, such as the swimming pool with its tile vaulted ceiling and the library with its arts and crafts Details, also contribute to the buildings architectural merit. The building stands in good condition with a high degree of integrity and is that significant in the area of architecture.*

*With associations in most urban and many suburban communities in the country, the YMCA continues its mission which was established a century and a half ago, to improve the mind, body, and spirit of its members. The success of the organization is realizing it's ability to constantly adapt its programs to meet evolving trends and needs in its community the secularization of the YMCA in the late 20th century reflect the decline of religious influence in main stream pacific culture. The increasing professionalism of their staff parallels the rise of social work in the fall volunteerism in recent decades, the corporate sponsorship of their programs reflect the clout of big business. The Jersey City YMCA has serve the community for over seven decades as a residential, recreational, and cultural landmark, and is the significant in the area of social history.*

#### **V. REQUIREMENTS AND STANDARDS FOR CONSIDERATION**

Staff notes regarding the Powers and Duties of the Historic Preservation Commission:

Per § 345-9, entitled Historic Preservation Commission, Section (B) entitled Powers and Duties of the Historic Preservation Commission, the Commission has the following relevant powers and duties:

(4) To advise and assist City officers, employees, boards and other bodies, including those at County, regional, State and Federal levels, on all matters which have potential impact on the landmark buildings, sites, structures, object or landscape features in the City or on the ambience of a historic district.

(17) To issue Certificates of Appropriateness or Certificates of No Effect in accordance with the rules and standards set forth herein.

The property is subject to following standards during the Board's consideration regarding the application seeking a Certificate of Appropriateness:

1. *Secretary of Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*
2. *City of Jersey City Zoning Ordinance § 345-58 entitled H - Historic District*
3. *City of Jersey City Zoning Ordinance § 345-71 entitled Historic Design Standards*
4. *City of Jersey City Historic Preservation Commission Rules & Regulations for Alterations & Additions to Buildings & New Construction in Historic Districts*

#### **VI. STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS**

Per §345-71(L)(1)(b)(i), "... replacement windows may be approved under a Certificate of No Effect if they match the historic windows in terms of configuration, operation, details,

material and finish.” Continuing, in §345-71(L)(1)(b)(iii) “...Proposals for replacement windows which do not meet these conditions will require a Certificate of Appropriateness.”

The proposed window replacement, while appropriate in terms of finish, operation and configuration, is inappropriate in terms of details. Overall construction details of the new aluminum casing does not bear a resemblance to the historic massing, proportions, or details, particularly in the visual weight of the proposed casement windows on the second floor. HPC Staff acknowledges that there is no documentation submitted regarding the material of the historic windows, and that there are multiple window made of a variety of materials on the building.

The proposed material in not considered by Staff to be an appropriate material for the level of significance and architectural style of the property or period of significance for a key-contributing building in the district that is individually designated on the National Register. Its approval would degrade the integrity of design and materials on this building and of the district as a whole. Therefore, HPC Staff recommends that this application for a Certificate of Appropriateness be denied per §345-71(L)(1) entitled *Historic Design Standards, Windows*.

However, HPC Staff acknowledges that the applicant will be providing testimony from a Historic Preservation professional regarding metal windows historically on the building and alterations to other building's of similar use and significance. If the Commission considers the proposal to be appropriate following testimony, it could potentially be approved, with conditions, under §345-71(A)(6), reading:

*Deteriorated architectural features shall be repaired rather than replaced wherever possible. In the event that replacement is necessary, the new material shall match the material being replaced in composition, design, color, texture and other visual qualities. Repair or replacement of missing architectural features shall be based on accurate duplications of features substantiated by historical, physical or pictorial evidence.*

Updated 6/12/2020: HPC Staff recommends approval of the submitted windows under a Certificate of Appropriateness with the following conditions:

- 1. All proposed material samples, inclusive of the proposed color, shall be reviewed and approved by HPC Staff for approval**
- 2. All measurements for door and window installation are to be verified by contractor for accuracy of installation.**
- 3. It is strongly recommended that the new casing be shipped separately for ease of installation.**
- 4. Historic masonry surrounding the opening is not to be damaged during work..**
- 5. Any new screen frames shall be painted the color of the windows frame and/or sash.**
- 6. The contractor is strongly cautioned about the possible existence of lead paint and is to exercise care when removing loose, deteriorated paint. Loose, degraded paint is to be disposed of properly in accordance with federal and state regulations. For more information visit <http://www.hud.gov/offices/lead/training/>**

*LBPguide.pdf.*

7. *This certificate does not permit any work outside of the scope presented and approved under H20-083. Any additional work must be applied for, reviewed, and approved under a separate application.*