

MAYOR'S COLUMN

The Morgan Manhattan Moving and Storage building has long been a fixture and somewhat of an anomaly in the center of our business district. Tucked away, yet looming behind stores at the corner of Pondfield Road and Park Place, it stands as a reminder of a different business era. The building is a three story behemoth that served for many years as a cold storage facility. A succession of new owners have been baffled as to how to integrate its use into our current business mix. As a result, ownership has turned over with some frequency. The last serious effort to make something new of this old space has been put on hold. The current owner, Mr. Steven Green, was the victim of a serious car accident and is now unable to manage his real estate holdings. As a result, his representatives are offering 100 Pondfield Road for sale.

Mr. Green had received a limited number of variances from the Village Planning Board to convert the structure into a combination home/office. Those variance requests that were denied included a rooftop pool and others are now subject to on-going litigation with the Village.

Village Trustees, the Village Administrator and I were offered the opportunity to tour the building last week to gauge Village interest in the structure. Like most of you, we walk by 100 Pondfield Road nearly every day, yet have no idea of the condition or configuration of the interior. The building has three floors with an expansive rooftop providing beautiful views of the Village and beyond.

The entrance floor consists of an enclosed office and open space, presumably for the loading and unloading of trucks during its past use. There is also a very antiquated but functioning elevator large enough to transport a standard sized auto from floor to floor. Much of the space is currently used to house the current owner's antique car collection. The second and third floors contain rows of fire proof storage rooms, now empty but still displaying the names of the former owners of the bins.

The treasure trove of history that must have been in those now empty rooms!

The building is constructed with concrete block. Asbestos on the roof and around the piping has recently been abated. The entire complex covers approximately 12,500 square feet and is built right up to the lot lines. The biggest drawback to the property is the lack of a second avenue of egress. The property fronts on the small shared alleyway between Studio One Hair Salon and the Wine Emporium and the rear abuts the parking lot owned by the A&P with no current easement rights. It is a very tight fit on all corners of the property.

Mr. Green's representatives are contacting developers as well as the Village to preview the site. The limited variances approved by the Village Planning Board would run with the property to the next owner. Any further modifications would require a new cycle of full Planning and Zoning Board review.

On first blush, the Trustees believe parking would be the highest and best use of this property. Approximately 45 spaces would be gained if the structure was demolished and surface parking without decking was created. However, demolition would be neither easy nor inexpensive due to the need to protect all the properties in close proximity. We currently have no information as to the possible costs associated with the transformation of the current space either into parking or retail use. We are only in the fact finding stage and have no information about possible purchasers of the property. We are seeking your thoughts on how this property might be used in view of the long term best interest of the Village.

This building is a one of a kind. Quite arguably a large white elephant in the center of our business district. Future use will significantly affect the character of our streetscape.

To that end, we are soliciting residents' views, creative solutions, or ideas for public-private partnership to optimize the use of 100 Pondfield Road going forward. Please share your thoughts.