



CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

March 16, 2005/Calendar No. 32

C 050164 HAM

IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD):

- 1) pursuant to Article 16 of the General Municipal Law of New York State for:
 - a) the designation of property located at 59-65 and 31-35 West 115th Street and 24-48 West 116th Street, p/o Sites 32A and 33 within the Milbank Frawley Circle West Urban Renewal Area (Block 1599, Lots 13-15, 17-18, 47-53, 56, 58-59), as an Urban Development Action Area; and
 - b) an Urban Development Action Area Project for such area; and
- 2) pursuant to Section 197-c of the New York City Charter for the disposition of such property to a developer to be selected by HPD;

to facilitate development of an eight- and twelve-story mixed-use building, tentatively known as the Kalahari, with approximately 249 residential units, commercial and community facility space, to be developed under HPD's Cornerstone Program, Borough of Manhattan, Community District 10.

Approval of three separate matters is required:

- 1) The designation of property located at 59-65 and 31-35 West 115th Street and 24-48 West 116th Street, p/o Sites 32A and 33 within the Milbank Frawley Circle West Urban Renewal Area (Block 1599, Lots 13-15, 17-18, 47-53, 56, 58-59), as an Urban Development Action Area; and
- 2) An Urban Development Action Area Project for such area; and
- 3) The disposition of such property to a developer to be selected by HPD.

The application for the proposed Urban Development Action Area designation and project, and disposition of city-owned property was submitted by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) on November 4, 2004. The requested action would facilitate the development of the Kalahari, a new mixed-use project to be developed within the Milbank-Frawley Circle West Urban Renewal Area.

The Department of Housing Preservation and Development states in its application that:

The Disposition Area site consists of 14 underutilized vacant properties and 1 building to be vacated and demolished, which tend to impair or, arrest the sound development of the surrounding community with, or without tangible physical blight. Incentives are needed in order to induce the correction of those substandard, insanitary and blighting conditions. The project activities would protect and promote health and safety and would promote sound growth and development. The Disposition Area is therefore eligible to be an Urban Development Action Area and the proposed project is therefore eligible to be an Urban Development Action Area Project pursuant to Article 16 of the General Municipal Law.

BACKGROUND

The New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) requests approval of an Urban Development Action Area designation and project, and disposition of city-owned property to facilitate the development of a new residential/commercial project, the Kalahari. The project site is located in the southern portion of Central Harlem, on Sites 32A and 33 within the Milbank Frawley Circle West Urban Renewal Area. The project is being developed under the city's Cornerstone program.

Prior Approvals

On April 23, 2003, the City Planning Commission approved three (3) applications for the Orleans, a 233-unit mixed residential/commercial project previously proposed to be built on the Kalahari project site. The previously requested actions included, an amendment the Milbank Frawley Circle West Urban Renewal Plan (C 030243 HUM), a rezoning from R7-2 and R7-2/C1-4 to C4-5X (C 030244 ZMM), and UDAAP and related disposition of city-owned property (C 030245 HAM). On May 29, 2003 the City Council approved the proposed urban renewal and zoning map amendments; however, the proposed UDAAP and disposition application was withdrawn on that date in response to concerns raised during the public review regarding the selected developer. The subject application enables HPD to advance residential and commercial development with a new developer on the proposed project site.

Project Description

The proposed project is located on a through-block site located mid-block on the north side of West 115th Street and the south side of West 116th Street between Malcolm X Boulevard and Fifth Avenue. Located in the Milbank Frawley Circle West Urban Renewal Area, the site comprises portions of two urban renewal sites (Sites 32A and 33) that total approximately 54,184 square feet (Block 1599, Lots 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 56, 58 and 59). Lots 14, 15, 17, 18, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 56, 58 and 59 comprise a 51,000 square foot vacant land assemblage, a portion of which formerly served as a baseball practice field used by the South Harlem Reds little league team, for which alternative field space has been found. Lot 13 contains a partially occupied, five-story tenement building, with one occupied unit. HPD is in the process of relocating the current tenant, after which the building will be demolished to make way for the new construction development.

The Kalahari site is zoned C4-5X, which allows residential and community facility uses up to 5.0 FAR and commercial development up to 4.0 FAR. The street wall could rise to 85 feet before setback, with a maximum building height of 125 feet. The project would have 352,036 square feet of floor area and would provide 249 condominium units in two 12-story buildings (i.e., North Building and South Building). It will also include approximately 46,500 square feet of ground floor commercial space and approximately 17,000 square feet of open space in the common terrace area between the two buildings. Accessory parking, to be placed below grade, would be provided for 62 cars.

The Kalahari zoning lot includes the proposed development site (Block 1599, Lots 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 56, 58 and 59) and the adjoining 1400 Fifth Avenue property (Block 1599, Lots 24, 26, 27, 28, 33, 35, 36, 37, 38, 40, 41, 133, 140 and 145), which is not part of the requested action. 1400 Fifth Avenue has 189,794 square feet of floor area and 84,781 square feet of unused floor area. By merging the two zoning lots as one, the developer could build up to 543,415 square feet of floor area (5.0 FAR) and shift unused floor area from 1400

Fifth Avenue to the Kalahari portion of the zoning lot. As proposed, the merged zoning lot would have 541,830 square feet of floor area (4.97 FAR).

In addition to housing, the Kalahari would provide a new “culturally specific cinema,” and performance art facility called the O. Micheax Center. The center would be located on West 116th Street, near Malcolm X Boulevard and would have approximately 600 seats. The project would also provide a state-of-the-art squash center, to be placed in the South Building. The proposed squash center comprises 18,046 square feet, to be managed by StreetSquash, a local education enrichment provider founded in 1999. The squash center would provide an affordable after-school program that combines academic tutoring with squash instruction, community service and mentoring. At present, StreetSquash sessions are held Monday through Thursday at the Harvard Club and at Columbia University. Accordingly, the Kalahari project would enable StreetSquash to conduct its program within Harlem. Proposed ground floor uses include a restaurant and retail space, which total 3,465 and 12,714 square feet, respectively.

Area Description

The Kalahari site is abutted by two churches, the Malcolm Shabazz Market and the aforementioned 1400 Fifth Avenue property. Facing the site, on West 116th Street, is the Renaissance, a 241-unit, eleven-story building with 60,000 square feet of ground floor retail space; across West 115th Street are the Martin Luther King Houses, a NYCHA-managed public housing complex comprising buildings that rise to 14 stories.

The proposed project complements ongoing efforts by HPD to redevelop blocks located along the axis formed by West 116th Street and Malcolm X Boulevard. Over the past five years, more than \$100 million in public and private funds have been invested in the area to redevelop city-owned vacant land that was previously designated and cleared in anticipation of unrealized urban renewal efforts. Recent capital investment in the area includes the aforementioned Renaissance and 1400 Fifth Avenue buildings, and Shabazz Gardens, a recently completed residential development comprising 45 three-family townhouses located on opposite sides of West 117th

Street between Adam Powell and Malcolm X boulevards, and on West 118th Street between Fifth Avenue and Malcolm X Boulevard.

The surrounding neighborhood is predominantly residential in character, typified by 3-4 story row houses and 4-5 story multiple dwellings. Graham Court and Corinthian Baptist Church, two city-designated landmarks, are located at West 116th Street and Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard. The Mount Morris Park Historic District, an area generally bounded by Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard, Mount Morris Park West, West 119th and West 124th streets, is also located within a short walking distance of the project site. Moreover, the area has several churches, schools and community facilities. Ground floor retail activity can be found along West 116th Street and along portions of Malcolm X Boulevard. The neighborhood is well served by mass transit, with subway access provided by the IRT Nos. 2 and 3 lines at West 116th Street and Malcolm X Boulevard. Bus service is also available on all major streets.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This application (C 050164 HAM) was reviewed pursuant to the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), and the SEQRA regulations set forth in Volume 6 of the New York Code of Rules and Regulations, Section 617.00 et seq. and the City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Rules of Procedure of 1991 and Executive Order No. 91 of 1977. The designated CEQR number is 03HPD029M. The lead agency is the Department of Housing Preservation and Development.

After a study of the potential environmental impact of the proposed action, a Negative Declaration was issued on January 3, 2003.

UNIFORM LAND USE REVIEW

This application (C 050164 HAM) was certified as complete by the Department of City Planning on November 15, 2004, and was duly referred to Community Board 10 and the Borough

President, in accordance with Article 3 of the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) rules.

Community Board Public Hearing

Community Board 10 did not submit a recommendation.

Borough President Recommendation

This application was considered by the Borough President, who issued a recommendation approving the application on January 19, 2005.

City Planning Commission Public Hearing

On February 16, 2005 (Calendar No. 9), the City Planning Commission scheduled March 2, 2005, for a public hearing on this application (C 050164 HAM). The hearing was duly held on March 2, 2005 (Calendar No. 8). There were three speakers in favor of this application and none in opposition.

Those speaking in favor included a representative from the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), the selected developer and the project's architect.

The representative from HPD introduced the project team. The developer provided information on the project. The developer also informed the Commission that they are aware of the community board's concerns regarding employment, housing affordability, project marketing, building design and site maintenance, and stated his commitment to work with the community board to address these issues.

The architect presented the project in more detail, describing the project's unique, African-inspired facade treatment.

There were no other speakers and the hearing was closed.

CONSIDERATION

The Commission believes that the proposed Urban Development Action Area designation and project, and disposition of city-owned property, are appropriate. The requested actions would facilitate the development of the Kalahari, a new mixed residential/commercial project to be developed under the city's Cornerstone Program.

The project is located on a through-block site located on a block bounded by West 115th and West 116th streets, Malcolm X Boulevard and Fifth Avenue. Located in the Milbank Frawley Circle West Urban Renewal Area, the site comprises portions of two urban renewal sites (Sites 32A and 33) that total approximately 54,184 square feet (Block 1599, Lots 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 56, 58 and 59). Except for Lot 13, the project site comprises a 51,000 square foot vacant land assemblage, a portion of which formerly served as a baseball practice field used by the South Harlem Reds little league team, for which alternative field space has been found. Lot 13 contains a partially occupied, five-story tenement building, with one occupied unit. HPD is in the process of relocating the current tenant, after which the building will be demolished to make way for the new construction development. Upon completion, the proposed project would provide 249 affordable condominium units, approximately 47,000 square feet of ground floor commercial space to serve current and future residents, and 62 parking spaces.

In addition to housing and retail space, the Kalahari would provide a new “culturally specific cinema” and performance art facility called the O. Micheax Center. The center would have approximately 600 seats. The project would also provide a state-of-the-art squash center, to be managed by StreetSquash, a local education enrichment provider founded in 1999. The squash center would provide an affordable after-school program that combines academic tutoring with squash instruction, community service and mentoring. At present, StreetSquash sessions are held at the Harvard Club and at Columbia University. The Commission notes that the proposed project would enable StreetSquash to conduct its program within Harlem.

The Commission notes the use of African-inspired themes in the Kalahari's proposed facade design and applauds the incorporation of green amenities and sustainable design into the proposed build program. The Commission believes, that sustainable design coupled with the Kalahari's unique aesthetic elements comprise an innovative and progressive approach to providing affordable housing in Harlem.

The Commission notes the concerns of the Community Board regarding other issues related to this project such as construction jobs, project marketing, site maintenance, building design and community participation as the project proceeds toward completion. While these issues are not within the purview of the actions before the Commission, the Commission strongly encourages HPD and the selected developer to keep the Community Board, Borough President and community residents apprised of, and to the extent practicable, involved in the project as it proceeds.

In addition to affordable housing, the Commission believes that the Kalahari would provide an important educational and recreational resource for the community and complement Harlem's rich network of cultural venues. The project also complements ongoing public and private redevelopment efforts on neighboring blocks and underscores the city's commitment to redevelop the West 116th Street commercial corridor. The Commission, therefore, believes that the proposed Urban Development Action Area designation and project, and disposition of city-owned property, are appropriate.

RESOLUTION

RESOLVED, that the City Planning Commission finds that the proposed disposition of city-owned property located at 59-65 and 31-35 West 115th Street and 24-48 West 116th Street, p/o Sites 32A and 33 within the Milbank Frawley Circle West Urban Renewal Area (Block 1599, Lots 13-15, 17-18, 47-53, 56, 58-59) conforms to the objectives and provisions of the Second Amended Milbank Frawley Circle West Urban Renewal Plan (C 030243 HUM), approved by the City Planning Commission on April 23, 2003, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the City Planning Commission finds that the action described herein will have no significant impact on the environment; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development has recommended the designation of property located at 59-65 and 31-35 West 115th Street and 24-48 West 116th Street, p/o Sites 32A and 33 within the Milbank Frawley Circle West Urban Renewal Area (Block 1599, Lots 13-15, 17-18, 47-53, 56, 58-59), in Community District 10, Borough of Manhattan, as an Urban Development Action Area; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development has also recommended the approval of an Urban Development Action Area Project for such property;

THEREFORE, be it further **RESOLVED**, that the City Planning Commission, after due consideration of the appropriateness of the actions, certifies its unqualified approval of the following matters pursuant to the Urban Development Action Area Act:

- a) the designation of property located at 59-65 and 31-35 West 115th Street and 24-48 West 116th Street, p/o Sites 32A and 33 within the Milbank Frawley Circle West Urban Renewal Area (Block 1599, Lots 13-15, 17-18, 47-53, 56, 58-59), as an Urban Development Action Area; and
- b) An Urban Development Action Area Project for such area; and

the City Planning Commission recommends that the New York City Council find that:

- a) The present status of the area tends to impair or arrest the sound development of the municipality;

- b) The financial aid in the form of tax incentives to be provided by the municipality pursuant to Section 696 of the Urban Development Action Area Act is necessary to enable the project to be undertaken; and
- c) The project is consistent with the policy and purposes stated in Section 691 of the Urban Development Action Area Act;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, by the City Planning Commission, pursuant to Section 197-c of the New York City Charter, that based on the environmental determination and the consideration described in this report, the application of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development for the disposition of city-owned property, located at 59-65 and 31-35 West 115th Street and 24-48 West 116th Street, p/o Sites 32A and 33 within the Milbank Frawley Circle West Urban Renewal Area (Block 1599, Lots 13-15, 17-18, 47-53, 56, 58-59), in Community District 10, Borough of Manhattan, to a developer to be selected by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, is approved (C 050164 HAM).

The above resolution (C 050164 HAM), duly adopted by the City Planning Commission on March 16, 2005 (Calendar No. 32) is filed with the Office of the Speaker, City Council, and the Borough President in accordance with the requirements of Section 197-d of the New York City Charter.

AMANDA M. BURDEN, AICP, **Chair**
KENNETH J. KNUCKLES, Esq., **Vice-Chairman**
ANGELA M. BATTAGLIA, IRWIN G. CANTOR, P.E.,
ANGELA R. CAVALUZZI, R.A., ALFRED C. CERULLO, III,
LISA A. GOMEZ, CHRISTOPHER KUI,
JOHN MEROLO, KAREN A. PHILLIPS, **Commissioners**

RICHARD W. EADDY, DOLLY WILLIAMS, **Commissioners recused**