



CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

February 3, 2021 / Calendar No. 16

C 210067 HUM

IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) pursuant to Section 505 of Article 15 of the General Municipal (Urban Renewal) Law of New York State and Section 197-c of the New York City Charter, for the sixteenth amendment to the Harlem East Harlem Urban Renewal Plan for the Harlem East Harlem Urban Renewal Area, Borough of Manhattan, Community Districts 10 and 11.

This application for a 16th amendment to the Harlem East Harlem Urban Renewal Plan (HEHURP) was filed by the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) on August 7, 2020. The proposed amendment to the HEHURP would extend its duration to 40 years from the approval date of this amendment, continuous from the prior expiration date of the HEHURP. The amendment would facilitate the continuation of HPD's administration and management in the Harlem East Harlem Urban Renewal Area (HEHURA) in Manhattan, Community Districts 10 and 11.

BACKGROUND

In 1968, the City designated the HEHURA and established the HEHURP pursuant to Article 15 of the General Municipal Law. Originally approved on November 20, 1968 (CP-20528), the HEHURP has facilitated residential, commercial, and community facility development throughout the East Harlem area. The HEHURA covers portions of East and Central Harlem neighborhoods, generally bounded by West 127th Street and East 133rd Street to the north; the Harlem River to the east; West 110th Street, East 106th Street, East 107th Street, and East 110th Street to the south; and Fifth Avenue, Madison Avenue, Park Avenue, Lexington Avenue, and Malcolm X Boulevard (Lenox Avenue) to the west.

The HEHURP was created to comprehensively redevelop the area; remove blight and maximize appropriate land use; remove or rehabilitate substandard and unsanitary structures; remove impediments to land assemblage and orderly development; strengthen the tax base of the City by encouraging development and employment opportunities in the area; provide new housing of

high quality and/or rehabilitated housing of upgraded quality; provide appropriate community facilities, parks, and recreational uses, retail shopping, public parking, and private parking; and provide a stable environment within the area that will not be a blighting influence on surrounding neighborhoods. Design objectives of the HEHURP are to develop the area in a manner compatible with the surrounding community in terms of scale and materials, and reinforce the existing urban pattern in areas with uniform street character. The designation of acquisition parcels includes site-specific controls and other supplementary controls such as screening and landscaping, open space requirements, recommended pedestrian facilities, and industrial performance standards. Building bulk and parking requirements are also included in the HEHURP.

The City has amended the HEHURP multiple times, including the most recent (15th) amendment in 2008 (C 080332 HUM), the first minor change to the 15th amendment in 2017 (N 170270 HCM), and the second minor change to the 15th amendment in 2018 (N 190147 HCM). The previous amendments aimed to spur economic development in East Harlem, by facilitating key acquisition, and disposition of sites within the HEHURA.

The City Council approved the East Harlem Rezoning in 2017 (C 170358 ZMM), (N 170359 ZRM), (C 170360 HUM), building upon recommendations in the East Harlem Neighborhood Plan, with the intent to create and preserve affordable housing in the area and support economic development. The East Harlem Rezoning area is entirely within the boundaries of the HEHURP.

The land uses in the surrounding area include residential, industrial, community facility (religious), institutional (public and private education), and recreational uses. Commercial uses are concentrated along Lexington, Third, Second, and First avenues, as well as the East 125th Street, 116th Street, 110th Street and 106th Street cross streets. The commercial and retail areas contain restaurant, retail, and cultural uses. The predominant zoning district in the surrounding area is R7-2, with various contextual R6A, R7A, R7B, R7D, and R7X districts mapped along the mid-blocks. The East Harlem Corridors Special District and the Special 125th Street Transit Land Use District are also mapped in the surrounding area.

Many parks, playgrounds and community gardens provide recreational opportunities for the East Harlem community, including Central Park, Randall’s Island, Marcus Garvey Park, and Thomas Jefferson Park. The area is also served by approximately 5.76 acres of publicly accessible waterfront at the Harlem River, known as the Harlem River Park. The surrounding area is served by a variety of transit options. The 4, 5, and 6 subway lines are available along Lexington Avenue, in addition to the Metro-North Harlem-125th Street station. New York City Transit runs several bus lines throughout the area, including interborough connections via the Bx15 and M60-SBS routes. The Robert F. Kennedy Bridge connects the FDR Drive and the Harlem River Drive in Manhattan and links the boroughs of Manhattan, Queens and the Bronx.

The approval of the application for a 16th amendment would facilitate the continuation of HPD’s administration and management in the HEHURA in Community Districts 10 and 11. Approval would extend the duration for an additional 40 years from the approval date of this amendment, continuous from the prior expiration date of the HEHURP.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The application (C 210067 HUM) 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 20HPD071M. The lead agency is the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD).

After a study of the potential environmental impact of the proposed action, a Negative Declaration was issued on September 2nd, 2020.

UNIFORM LAND USE REVIEW

The application (C 210067 HUM) was certified as complete by the Department of City Planning on September 14th, 2020 and was duly referred to Manhattan Community Districts 10 and 11, the

Borough Board and the Borough President, in accordance with Title 62 of the Rules of the City of New York, Section 2-02(b).

Community Board Public Hearing

Community District 10 held two public hearings on October 15, 2020 and November 4, 2020. On November 4, 2020, Community District 10 voted to approve the application (C 210067 HUM) without conditions, voting 31 in favor, one opposed, and one abstaining.

Community District 11 held three public hearings on October 14, 2020, on October 27, 2020 and on November 24, 2020. On November 24, 2020, Community District 11 voted to approve the application (C 210067 HUM) with conditions, voting 22 in favor, six opposed, and 11 abstaining, outlining the following conditions:

- “1. The renewal term not exceed twelve (12) years;
2. The renewal only apply to the blocks remaining to be developed as part of the East 125th Street Development Project; and
3. The design guidelines outlined in the current plan remain in place.”

Borough Board Recommendation

The Borough Board held a meeting on December 17th, 2020, and passed a resolution in support of the application (C 210067 HUM) with the following condition:

- “1. HPD must give an update every 5 years to Manhattan Community Districts 10 and 11 and the Manhattan Borough President to alert them of any changes in plans for Acquisition Parcels within the HEHURP.”

Borough President Recommendation

The application (C 210067 HUM) was considered by the Manhattan Borough President, who issued a recommendation for approval on December 17, 2020, with the following condition.

“1. HPD must give an update every 5 years to Manhattan Community Districts 10 and 11, and the Manhattan Borough President to alert them of any changes in plans for Acquisition Parcels within the HEHURP.”

PUBLIC HEARING

On December 16th, 2020 (Calendar No. 5), the City Planning Commission scheduled January 6th, 2021, for a public hearing on the application (C 210067 HUM). The hearing was duly held on January 6th, 2021 (Calendar No. 25).

There were four speakers in support of the application, including three representatives from HPD. The speakers from HPD described the urban renewal process, the HEHURP’s geography and design and development controls remaining in place, and the critical need to amend the HEHURP to extend its duration for an additional 40 years.

One elected official representative, on behalf of the Manhattan Borough President, submitted a statement of support, noting the importance of preserving the key design guidelines in order to avoid unintended consequences to the Harlem community when the protection of long-term urban renewal plans is allowed to expire.

There were no other additional speakers, and the hearing was closed.

CONSIDERATION

The Commission believes that the proposed amendment to the HEHURP is appropriate.

Since its inception in 1968, the HEHURP has been amended 15 times to facilitate residential, commercial and community facility development projects across the Central Harlem and East Harlem neighborhoods. The sole proposed change to the HEHURP is the extension of its duration for another 40 years from the approval date of this 16th amendment, continuous from the prior expiration date of the HEHURP (December 19, 2020).

During the course of the public review, some neighborhood residents stated that the duration of a 40-year extension was too long and that design guidelines were too lenient or insufficient. HPD presented the proposed time extension to Community Districts 10 and 11 on five occasions to further elaborate on the nature of the application, give an overview of the HEHURP and clarify that HPD has no imminent plans to acquire any new sites under the HEHURP. HPD also agreed to comply with the Manhattan Borough President and Borough Board recommendations.

The 40-year extension of the HEHURP allows HPD to continue the ongoing administration and management of the HEHURA and keeps in place urban design controls that have been important for the community in ensuring that future development is contextual to the existing neighborhoods. The 40-year time period is standard for urban renewal plan extensions across the city, it also allows multi-phase projects, such as the Media, Entertainment, and Cultural Center at East 125th Street development, to have all phases conveyed pursuant to the same time frame of the HEHURP. Accordingly, the Commission believes that the proposed 16th amendment to the HEHURP is appropriate.

RESOLUTION

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

RESOLVED, that the City Planning Commission finds that the proposed 16th Amendment to the Harlem East Harlem Urban Renewal Plan is an appropriate plan for the area involved, complies with provisions of Article 15 of the General Municipal Law and conforms to the comprehensive community plan for the development of the municipality as a whole and is consistent with local objectives; and

RESOLVED, that the City Planning Commission, pursuant to Section 197-c of the New York City Charter and Section 505, Article 15 of the General Municipal Law, and after due consideration of the appropriateness of this action, certifies its unqualified approval of the 16th

Amendment to the Harlem East Harlem Urban Renewal Plan, Community District 10 and 11, Borough of the Manhattan.

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 16th Amendment to the Harlem East Harlem Urban Renewal Plan (C 210067 HUM).

The above resolution (C 210067 HUM) duly adopted by the City Planning Commission on February 3rd, 2021 (Calendar No. 16), 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.

MARISA LAGO, *Chair*

KENNETH J. KNUCKLES, ESQ., *Vice Chairman*

**DAVID BURNEY, ALLEN P. CAPPELLI, ESQ., ALFRED C. CERULLO III,
JOSEPH I. DOUEK, RICHARD W. EADDY, HOPE KNIGHT, ANNA HAYES LEVIN,
ORLANDO MARIN, LARISA ORTIZ, RAJ RAMPERSHAD**, *Commissioners*