



## **CITY PLANNING COMMISSION**

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January 19, 2005/Calendar No. 19

C 040468 PCK

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**IN THE MATTER OF** an application submitted by the Department of Homeless Services and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, pursuant to Section 197-c of the New York City Charter for site selection and acquisition of property located at 338 Forbell Street (Block 4258, Lots 34 and 36), and site selection of property located at Forbell Street and Elderts Lane, (Block 4258, Lot 1), for use as a transitional residence, Community District 5, Borough of Brooklyn.

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This application (C 040468 PCK) was filed on May 19, 2004, by the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) for site selection and acquisition of state-owned property located at 338 Forbell Street (Block 4258, Lots 34 and 36), and site selection of city-owned property located at Forbell Street and Elderts Lane, (Block 4258, Lot 1), for continued use as a transitional residence.

### **BACKGROUND**

DHS seeks site selection and acquisition of 338 Forbell Street (Block 4258, Lots 1, 34, and 36) to continue its use as a transitional residential homeless facility, located in Community District 5, East New York, Brooklyn. Lot 1 is city-owned, and is proposed for site selection. Lots 34 and 36 are owned by the NYS Office of Mental Health (OMH) and are for site selection and acquisition.

338 Forbell Street (Block 4258, Lots 1, 34, and 36) is an existing 194-bed transitional homeless facility located on the northeast corner of Forbell Street and Sutter Avenue in an R4 zoning district with a C1-2 overlay. DHS proposes to continue to use Lot 1 as an outdoor paved recreation space with benches and continue to use Lots 34 and 36 as a three-story, brick walled, dormitory-style

transitional homeless facility with a parking and loading dock area.

Besides the Forbell transitional facility, Block 4258 contains the two-story Linden Motel to the north on Belmont Avenue and Conduit Boulevard. To the south of the block are two- and three-story residential buildings, a scattering of vacant lots, and the MTA subway yards. To the west is Robert Venable Park and two- and three-story residential buildings . Conduit Boulevard to the north is a six-lane commercial road lined with gas stations, fast food chains, a grass median, and PS 214 with adjoining Belmont Playground in the immediate vicinity.

The applicant seeks approval to continue the use of the Forbell Street Facility as transitional housing for 194 single homeless men. The residence is currently run by Samaritan Village since 1995 and treats homeless men recovering from drug abuse through referrals made by the DHS assessment center. The facility's program is designed to help homeless men achieve sobriety, maintain a drug-free life style, and develop life skills, such as securing employment, finding housing, and independent living. Under Samaritan's direction, the facility acts as a modified therapeutic community with available substance abuse treatments, intensive case management services for clients in treatment, and to handle a myriad of problems, such as mental health issues. Clients are provided with a bed, locker, meals, and a full range of on-site social services. Ancillary support services, such as mental health and substance abuse, educational and vocational, and social and recreational opportunities, are offered on and off site, in addition to budgeting their resources and managing their medication regime.

Forbell residents are given a 9-12 month stay with work experience, educational programs, and counseling services. Clients involved in facility-related work activities receive stipends for job performance. Upon leaving the Forbell facility, clients are placed in permanent or supported housing with follow-up.

The facility is in close proximity to public transportation with the “A” subway service about four blocks away at Grant Avenue. Furthermore, the B14 bus runs on Sutter Avenue one block away, the Q7 bus runs along Pitkin and Sutter Avenues four blocks away, and the B15 bus runs along Linden Boulevard approximately six blocks away.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

This application (C 040468 PCK) 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 New York City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Rules of Procedure of 1991 and Executive Order No. 91 of 1977. The lead agency is the Department of Homeless Services.

This application was determined to be a Type II action which requires no further environmental review.

## **UNIFORM LAND USE REVIEW**

This application (C 040468 PCK) was certified as complete by the Department of City Planning on September 7, 2004, and was duly referred to Community Board 5 and the Brooklyn Borough President in accordance with Article 3 of the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) rules.

### **Community Board Public Hearing**

Community Board 5 held a public hearing on this application on November 17, 2004, and on that date, by a vote of 11 to 10 with 3 abstentions, adopted a resolution recommending disapproval of this application with the following recommendation:

“Reason for Disapproval:

Notwithstanding the recommendations of our Land Use Committee for approval of this item, a CB 5 member identify [sic] himself as the chairperson of this site advisory [sic] committee and indicated, the Dept. of Homeless Service was not truthful responding to the many findings and issues with the facility And, a member of the community indicated very passionately about the conditions of the site being infested with drugs, beggars, etc.”

However, the recommendation was non-complying because a quorum was not present for the vote.

### **Borough President Recommendation**

This application (C 040468 PCK) was considered by the Borough President of Brooklyn, who issued a recommendation disapproving the application on December 15, 2004, subject to the following conditions:

The Borough President believes that there a number of issues that need to be addressed before the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services are permitted site selection and acquisition of the Forbell Street Transitional Residence.

The Forbell Street facility was originally permitted and approved in 1992 as a transitional residence and has become a homeless shelter; in fact the application still indicates it as a

“transitional residence” although the operator reports that the profile has changed. For all practical purposes a portion of the population is not transitional. The operator of the facility has also indicated that Mentally Ill [sic] and chemically Addicted [sic] clients have been assigned to the shelter, while originally the facility was designed to serve as a rehabilitation center for willing participants. The facility should not be permitted unless there is a commitment from DHS to return the program to its original transitional and rehabilitation purpose by assigning clients willing to engage in rehabilitation.

These changes have also occurred without proper notification to the community of its elected officials and without the input of the site’s Community Advisory Board. DHS needs to engage in a meaningful dialogue regarding the future of this facility with all of these parties, and provide all requested public information in a timely manner.

### **City Planning Commission Public Hearing**

On December 8, 2004 (Calendar No. 1), the City Planning Commission scheduled December 22, 2004, for a public hearing on this application (C 040468 PCK). The hearing was duly held on December 22, 2004 (Calendar No. 9). There was one speaker in favor of the application and none in opposition.

The Deputy Commissioner for Adult Services for the Department of Homeless Services spoke in favor of the application. He gave a brief history of the project and its service operator, a description of the various programs offered at the facility, and discussed how the service operator works with the community through a Community Advisory Board.

There were no other speakers and the hearing was closed.

## **CONSIDERATION**

The City Planning Commission believes that this application by the Department of Homeless Services and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services for site selection and acquisition of property located at 338 Forbell Street (Block 4258, Lots 34 and 36), and site selection of city-owned property located at Forbell Street and Elderts Lane, (Block 4258, Lot 1), in Community District 5, Borough of Brooklyn, for continued use as a transitional residence, is appropriate.

The Forbell transitional facility has been operating at this location since 1992 providing critically-needed transitional housing and social services to 194 homeless men. The facility contains an enclosed open recreation area for the residents' use.

Regarding the Community Board and Borough President recommendations, the Commission notes that the facility is operating as described in the subject ULURP application and as previously approved. At the Commission's public hearing, DHS indicated that Samaritan Village, the not-for-profit sponsor of the shelter, previously formed a Community Advisory Board to address community concerns as they arise. Furthermore, a January 6, 2005 letter to the Department of City Planning from the Department of Homeless Services, states that "Samaritan Village has set up a meeting with the Brooklyn Borough President's Office and the Department of Homeless Services to discuss the concerns of the Community Board with the Forbell Men's Shelter. DHS and Samaritan Village have always worked together to solve any community issues and are committed

to continue doing so. Upon notification of any outstanding issues DHS and Samaritan Village will work together in rectifying them.”

The Commission notes that a follow-up meeting occurred on January 13, 2005, with the Borough President’s staff and representatives from Samaritan Village and DHS. DHS clarified the facility’s history, program, and services. Samaritan Village and DHS reiterated their willingness to work with the community board and Borough President. The Commission notes that at the meeting Samaritan Village stated that the local precinct had no reports of crimes filed at the facility’s location, which was confirmed by the Borough President’s staff.

Therefore, the Commission believes that approval of this site selection and acquisition would allow the continued use of this facility as transitional residence, providing a badly needed housing resource.

## **RESOLUTION**

**RESOLVED**, the City Planning Commission finds the action described herein will have no significant impact on the environment; and 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 consideration described in this

report, the application ( C 040468 PCK) of the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) for site selection and acquisition of state-owned property located at 338 Forbell Street (Block 4258, Lots 34 and 36), and site selection of city-owned property located at Forbell Street and Elderts Lane, (Block 4258, Lot 1), in Community District 5, Borough of Brooklyn for use as a transitional residence is approved.

The above resolution, duly adopted by the City Planning Commission on January 19, 2005 (Calendar No. 19), is filed with the Office of the Speaker, City Council, and the Borough President of Brooklyn 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, RICHARD W. EADDY, JANE D. GOL, LISA A. GOMEZ,**  
**CHRISTOPHER KUI, JOHN MEROLO, KAREN A. PHILLIPS, DOLLY WILLIAMS,**  
Commissioners