



## **CITY PLANNING COMMISSION**

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December 2, 2009/Calendar No. 6

C 090504 HAM

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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 110 East 118<sup>th</sup> Street and 1669-1671 Park Avenue (Block 1645, Lots 70 and 71) 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 selected by HPD;

to facilitate development of a six-story building, tentatively known as East Harlem Veterans Initiative, with approximately 87 residential units.

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Approval of three separate matters is required:

1. The designation of 110 East 118<sup>th</sup> Street and 1669-1671 Park Avenue in the Borough of Manhattan (Block 1645, Lots 70 and 71) as an Urban Development Action Area;
2. An Urban Development Action Area Project for such property; and
3. The disposition of such property to a developer selected by HPD.

The application for the Urban Development Action Area designation and project approval and disposition of city-owned property was submitted by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) on June 17, 2009.

Approval of this application would facilitate the development of a six-story building, tentatively known as the East Harlem Veteran's Initiative, containing approximately 87 residential units.

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

The Project Area consists of underutilized vacant property that tends 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 these substandard, unsanitary, 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 Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) seeks approval of an Urban Development Action Area designation, project approval, and disposition of two city-owned properties to facilitate the East Harlem Veterans Initiative Project. The project site is located on the east side of Park Avenue between East 117<sup>th</sup> and East 118<sup>th</sup> streets in East Harlem.

Located within an R7-2/C2-4 zoning district, the project site includes two city-owned lots (Block 1645, Lots 70 and 71), which comprise the development site. A portion of Lot 71 is occupied by a community garden known as the Magic Garden; the garden also includes a portion of an adjoining city-owned lot (Block 1645, Lot 3), which is not part of the development site. Block 1645, Lots 70, 71 and Lot 3 will be incorporated into one zoning lot. However, Lot 3 will remain as open space in City ownership; it will be transferred to the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to be preserved as a community garden.

The rest of the block and the surrounding neighborhood are predominantly residential in character, typified by five and six-story multi-family buildings and institutional uses, such as schools and

9

churches. St Paul's Church adjoins the project site along East 118<sup>th</sup> Street. Local retail activity can be found on East 116<sup>th</sup> and East 125<sup>th</sup> streets and on portions of Madison and Lexington avenues.

Subway service is provided by the IRT No. 6 line at East 116<sup>th</sup> Street and Lexington Avenue; bus service is provided on East 116<sup>th</sup> and East 125<sup>th</sup> streets and on all major avenues.

The proposed project would develop a six-story building with 86 affordable studio apartments for low-income individuals and formerly homeless veterans to be referred by the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS) that is intended to be affordable at 60 percent AMI. The project also provides a two-bedroom unit for a superintendent and security at the front desk. Approximately 3,000 square feet of space would be used in the basement to provide for support social services, a laundry room, community room and a conference room. The support social services, such as employment, education and life skills counseling will be available to all of the building's residents. Landscaped open space comprising approximately 1,661 square feet would be provided at the rear of the building.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

This application (C 090504 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 for Procedure of 1991 and Executive Order No. 91 of 1977. The designated CEQR number is 09HPD010M. The lead agency is the Department of Housing Preservation and Development.

After a study of the potential environmental impacts of the proposed action, a Negative Declaration was issued on June 23, 2009.

### **Uniform Land Use Review**

This application (C 090504 HAM) was certified as complete by the Department of City Planning on June 29, 2009, and was duly referred to Manhattan Community Board 11 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 Board 11 held a public hearing on this application on July 21, 2009, and on that date, by a vote of 18 to 7 with 9 abstentions, adopted a resolution recommending disapproval of the application.

### **Borough President Recommendation**

This application was considered by the Manhattan Borough President who issued a recommendation approving the application on October 8, 2009.

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

On October 7, 2009 (Calendar No. 1), the City Planning Commission scheduled October 21, 2009 for a public hearing on this application (C 090504 HAM). The hearing was duly held on October 21, 2009 (Calendar 15). There were seven speakers in favor.

Those speaking in favor included the project sponsor's Executive Director and staff who gave a

9

brief project chronology and overview of the services to be provided at the proposed residence. The project sponsor, The Lantern Group, also cited Schaeffer Hall, a permanent supportive residence which they manage on East 118<sup>th</sup> Street, which provides services similar to that proposed for the East Harlem Veterans Initiative development. The project architect described the proposed build program and building layout. The project's social service provider described the scope of support services to be given on-site. A representative from HPD described the city's Supportive Housing Program. A second HPD representative also appeared in favor as did a representative from the Manhattan Borough President's office.

There were no other speakers on the application and the hearing was closed.

## **CONSIDERATION**

The Commission believes that the proposed Urban Development Action Area designation and project (UDAAP), and disposition of city-owned property are appropriate.

The requested action would facilitate the development of the East Harlem Veteran's Initiative. The proposed project, a contextual building, to be located on the east side of Park Avenue between East 117<sup>th</sup> and East 118<sup>th</sup> streets, would contain approximately 86 affordable studio apartments for low-income individuals and formerly homeless veterans to be referred by the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS). The project would also provide a two-bedroom unit for a superintendent. The project has on-site support social services, security, a laundry room, social gathering and conference spaces and a landscaped rear yard. A community garden will also be located on a portion of the zoning lot.

During the course of its review, the Commission noted that the proposed project is located in East Harlem, which has a number of supportive housing residences including Schaeffer Hall, a supportive residence that is located on East 118<sup>th</sup> Street. In a letter to the Commission dated October 29, 2009, HPD stated that there are many locations throughout the city and in East Harlem where HPD has developed affordable housing buildings in close proximity to one another. The letter further states that “supportive housing works best when the community is already familiar with the sponsor.” The selected sponsor has “successfully owned and managed Schaeffer Hall located across the street since 2001 and have established relationships with their neighbors.”

The Commission believes that the proposed project provides permanent affordable housing for a vulnerable population which includes low income persons and formerly homeless veterans. In addition to meeting this critical need, this underutilized vacant parcel is being returned to productive use. Accordingly, the Commission believes that the requested 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 action described herein will have no significant impact on the environment;

**WHEREAS**, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development has recommended the designation of property located at 110 East 118<sup>th</sup> Street and 1669-1671 Park Avenue (Block 1645, Lots 70 and 71) in Community District 11 Borough of Manhattan, as an Urban Development Acton 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 properties located at 110 East 118<sup>th</sup> Street and 1669-1671 Park Avenue (Block 1645, Lots 70 and 71) 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, 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 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 110 East 118<sup>th</sup> Street and 1669-1671 Park Avenue (Block 1645, Lots 70 and 71) in Community District 11, Borough of Manhattan, to a developer to be selected by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development for the construction of approximately 87 residential units is approved (C 090504 HAM).

The above resolution, duly adopted by the City Planning Commission on December 2, 2009 (Calendar No. 6) 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**, FAICP, Chair  
**KENNETH J. KNUCKLES**, Esq., Vice Chairman  
**ANGELA M. BATTAGLIA**, **RAYANN BESSER**,  
**IRWIN G. CANTOR, P.E.**, **ALFRED C. CERULLO, III**,  
**BETTY Y. CHEN**, **MARIA M. DEL TORO**, **RICHARD W. EADDY**,  
**NATHAN LEVENTHAL**, **ANNA HAYES LEVIN**,  
**SHIRLEY A. MCRAE**, Commissioners

**KAREN A. PHILLIPS**, Commissioner Voting No



