

**BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION**  
**ULURP APPLICATION NO: C 120161 HAX**  
**BROOK AVENUE APARTMENTS**  
**May 1, 2012**

**DOCKET DESCRIPTION**

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 493 Brook Avenue and 457/467 East 147<sup>th</sup> Street (Block 2292, Lots 49 and 50) 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 the disposition of such property to a developer to be selected by HPD:

To facilitate development of a five-story building and a seven-story building, with a total of approximately 66 dwelling units and 1,710 square feet of commercial space, to be developed under the Department of Housing Preservation and Development's Low-Income Rental Program.

**BACKGROUND**

Approving this application will facilitate construction of two multi-family residences to be constructed on adjacent vacant lots. The two sites are located on the north side of East 147<sup>th</sup> Street, on Block 2292. Lot 49 (the East Lot) offers 2,248 square feet, on the northwest corner of Brook Avenue and is zoned R6/C1-4. Lot 50 (the West Lot) offers 14,991 square feet and is located on the north side of East 147<sup>th</sup> Street, between Bergen Avenue and Brook Avenue and zoned R6. Consolidating these sites, they comprise 17,239 square feet and are situated in Bronx Community District #1. To increase additional floor area to the project site, the developer is purchasing unused development rights (air rights) from two adjacent properties (Block 2292, Lots 46 and 56), owned by Con Edison. Lot 46 yields 6,746 square feet and Lot 56 yields 9,994 square feet, which when combined the developer achieves an additional 16,740 square feet for development purposes.

The first of the two buildings (Building One) to be constructed is 457-467 East 147<sup>th</sup> Street (Block 2292, Lot 50). The site is zoned R6. Occupying the western portion of the two adjacent lots, this building will consist of five-stories and contain fifty five residential units; including:

7 studios offering between:	440-500 square feet of living space
35 one-bedroom units offering between:	560-700 square feet of living space
12 two-bedroom units offering between:	790-835 square feet of living space
3 three-bedroom units offering:	1,050 square feet of living space

Building One will include underground parking for 28 vehicles with access on East 147<sup>th</sup> Street. A rear garden area featuring space for both passive recreation and a play area for children, will consist of 5,700 square feet.

The second building (Building Two) to be constructed is 493 Brook Avenue (Block 2292, Lot 49). The site is zoned R6/C1-4. Occupying the northwest corner of Brook Avenue at East 147<sup>th</sup> Street, this building will consist of seven-stories, offering 11 residential units, including

1 one-bedroom unit offering:	800 square feet of living space
10 two-bedroom units offering:	905-915 square feet of living space

A community room providing 925 square feet is envisioned. Additional amenities to be included in the cellar are interior bicycle storage facilities, personal property storage rooms and a laundry room. A roof garden area consisting of 785 square feet will be accessible from the 7<sup>th</sup> floor. Commercial space in the building will offer two locations; the first with access from Brooke Avenue is to be 810 square feet, the second with access on East 147<sup>th</sup> Street will offer 900 square feet. No on-site parking is to be provided.

Development of the surrounding community is typified by low and midrise residential buildings. Flanking the northern property line of this proposed development are two one cooling stations operated by Con Edison. A one-story retail building is on the southwest corner of Brooke Avenue at East 147<sup>th</sup> Street. Additional retail activity and access to bus transportation are found on Willis Avenue and at the nexus of East 149<sup>th</sup> Street, Melrose Avenue, Third Avenue and Willis Avenue (aka The Hub). Subway services via the #2 and #5 trains are also available at The Hub. St. Mary's Park consists of 35-acres and is located two blocks south of the site. A year-round recreational center including swimming facilities are offered at St. Mary's Park.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND ULRUP CERTIFICATION**

This application has been reviewed pursuant to CEQR and SEQR and received a Negative Declaration, meaning the proposed development will have no impact on the surrounding environment. The City Planning Commission certified this application as complete on February 6, 2012.

## **BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD PUBLIC HEARING**

Bronx Community Board #1 held a public hearing on this application on March 29, 2012. A unanimous vote recommending approval of this application was 24 in favor, zero opposed and zero abstaining.

## **BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S PUBLIC HEARING**

A public hearing was convened by the Bronx Borough President on April 24, 2012. The applicant was present and spoke in favor of this application. No other members of the public offered comment and the hearing was closed.

## **BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION**

Development at this location has a protracted history of potential projects that, for numerous reasons, did not advance. Among these is the constricted building lot size. I am therefore pleased to learn that, through the purchase of air rights from two adjacent Con Edison sites, this challenge is resolved. Of comparable importance is that these sites are likely to be brownfields. When alternative sites were plentiful, developers considered that mitigating a brownfield was a cost they could avoid by selecting another location. Now however, as vacant land is scarce, the proper cleaning of a polluted site followed by its development results in a remediated brownfield and new, job creating construction.

The proposed development reviewed at my public hearing suggests that a comprehensive, well designed plan for residential and retail construction is now envisioned. The structures proposed for both lots will offer the community well-designed affordable housing while introducing to the surrounding neighborhood dignified structures featuring formal façade treatments. In addition, by incorporating a roof garden into the design of 493 Brook Avenue, this open space requirement is creatively provided.

There are, however, two additional matters that require comment. The first of these is the lack of ample three-bedroom units. Given the need many families have for newly constructed affordable housing, I am compelled to note that this project fails to satisfy my policy-preference that a minimum of ten percent of the units to be built offer three-bedroom accommodations. The second matter pertains to the Con Edison facilities abutting this proposed development. While it is understood that no safety requirements are being overlooked by the developer of these properties or Con Edison, nonetheless it is necessary to emphasize that every consideration be given to assure that over time no hazardous conditions ever materialize.

I recommend approval of this application.