

**BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION
ULURP APPLICATION NO: C 110365 HAX
EL RIO APARTMENTS
September 30, 2011**

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 East 179th Street and Boston Road (Block 3140, p/o Lot 32) 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 an 8-story building with approximately 65 dwelling units of supportive housing.

BACKGROUND

Approving this application will facilitate construction of an eight-story residential building designed to cater specifically to both adults over the age of 55 with mental handicaps and low-income senior citizens over the age of 62. The proposed building to be known as El Rio Residence, will offer 65 units of affordable housing. The site consists of approximately 2,200 square feet of vacant property and is part of Block 3140/Lot 32. The Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) will dispose of this site to the owner of the adjacent Block 3140/Lot 1. This site is located on the north side of East 179th Street, between Boston Road on the west and the Bronx River to the east. The property is zoned R7-1 and located in Bronx Community District # 6.

The intent of the purchaser of Block 3140 Lot 32 is to merge this lot consisting of 2,200 square feet, with Block 3140 Lot 1, consisting of 21,904 square feet. Combined the total gross lot size measures 24,104 square feet. Upon unification of these properties, The El Rio Residence would be constructed on what is currently an exterior parking lot serving an existing three story building that currently occupies part of Block 3140, Lot 1. A landscaped buffer will separate the newly constructed building from the existing building on Lot 1

The proposed El Rio Residence will consist of eight stories, offering a total of 65 studio apartments. Twenty nine units will serve low income senior citizens over the age of 62. The remaining 36 units will provide accommodations to adults with mental illness. The studio units

will average 322 square feet each. Supportive services a medical office consisting of 442 square feet. A multi-purpose room consisting of 238 square feet is to be included. An exterior garden will offer 2,424 square feet of landscaped property for passive use. Additional amenities to be located on the first floor include a conference room, communal kitchen and laundry facility. The proposed building will also feature natural light corridors opposite the elevator bank and satisfy Enterprise Green energy mandates. On-site parking is not required and will not be provided, however four spaces for bicycles will be located in the basement of the El Rio Residence.

Development of the surrounding community is dominated by the Lambert Houses which includes mid-rise residential units. The Bronx Zoo is situated two blocks north of the site. The Bronx River is two blocks west. Located two blocks south is East Tremont Avenue where retail activity and the Bronx River Art Center are situated. Subway service via the Lexington Avenue #5 and the Broadway #2 lines are accessible at the Tremont Avenue/West Farms station. Bus transportation operates on East Tremont Avenue and on Boston Road.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND ULURP CERTIFICATION

This application was reviewed pursuant to CEQR and SEQR and received a Negative Declaration, meaning that the proposed development poses no threat to the environment. The City Planning Commission certified this application as complete on June 20, 2011.

COMMUNITY BOARD HEARING

A public hearing on this matter was held by Bronx Community Board 6 on August 24, 2011. A vote recommending approval was 18 in favor, 1 opposed and zero abstaining.

BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S PUBLIC HEARING

On September 15, 2011 the Bronx Borough President convened a public hearing on this matter. Representatives of the applicant spoke in favor of this application. No other speakers spoke to this matter and the hearing was closed.

BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION

The proposed El Rio Residence will provide low income senior citizens and the mentally handicapped a well designed, appropriately staffed facility, managed by Comunilife, a highly regarded not-for-profit health care provider.

I am especially pleased that the architects of the proposed El Rio Residence recognize the existing development, specifically the low rise, historic structure that is adjacent to the El Rio site. By incorporating into the new structure façade details that share numerous design characteristics of the neighboring building, the visual impact of the taller, more modern facility will be minimized. Likewise, I was pleased to learn that the exterior lighting for the new building will be tempered to illuminate only the areas requiring light and not impose such light on neighboring properties.

In short, this is a well designed project that affords Communilife an opportunity to offer quality care to its residents, while complimenting the host community with a building that is energy efficient, modern in function.

I recommend approval of this application.