

BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION  
ULURP APPLICATION NOS:  
C 160268 HAX, C 160267 ZMX, N160269 ZRX, C 160270 ZSX, C160271 ZSX

La Central (Bronxchester Sites 6 & 7A)  
6/17/16

DOCKET DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND

The City of New York - Department of Housing Preservation & Development (HPD), on behalf of the project sponsor, La Central Manager, LLC, is seeking approval for several discretionary actions (collectively, the "Proposed Actions") to facilitate the development of an underutilized 4.3-acre (187,645-square-foot) site in the portion of the Melrose neighborhood of Bronx Community District #1 known as "The Hub." The Proposed Actions include:

- Disposition of City-owned property as well as designation and approval of the project as an Urban Development Action Area Project (UDAAP)
- Zoning map amendment to change M1-1 and C4-4 districts to C6-2
- Zoning text amendment to Zoning Resolution (ZR) Appendix F to map a Mandatory Inclusionary
- Housing (MIH) Area throughout the Project Area
- Special permits to allow bulk and use modifications for a Large-Scale General Development (LSGD)
- Approval for construction financing

The Project Area is herein defined as the approximately 187,645 square-foot (sf) assemblage of six City-owned properties collectively referred to as Parcels A, B, and C. The Proposed Actions would further the trend of residential redevelopment in the South Bronx and enliven currently underutilized City-owned sites. Parcel A consists of four lots (Block 2361, Lots 1, 25, and 26, and 50) with frontage on East 152<sup>nd</sup> Street (demapped in 1975 but currently open to traffic through the Project Area), East 153<sup>rd</sup> Street, Bergen Avenue, Brook Avenue and Westchester Avenue. Parcel A has a total area of approximately 128,808 square feet (sf) and is currently vacant with the exception of the demapped portion of East 152<sup>nd</sup> Street which extends between Bergen and Brook Avenues. Parcel B (Block 2294, Lot 32) is at the southernmost extent of the Project Area, located to the south of Parcel A and is generally bounded by Westchester Avenue to the north, Bergen Avenue to the west, and the elevated IRT #2 and #5 subway tracks to the south. Parcel B has a total area of approximately 50,551 sf and is currently occupied with a parking lot and a vacant two-story building (483 Westchester Avenue). Parcel C (Block 2363, Lot 1) is at the northernmost extent of the Project Area and has frontage on East 153<sup>rd</sup> Street, Bergen Avenue, and Brook Avenue. Parcel C has a total area of approximately 7,134 sf and is currently vacant.

The Proposed Actions would facilitate the redevelopment of the above-referenced properties with an approximately 1.1 million gross-square-foot (gsf) mixed-use development encompassing five separate buildings ranging from nine stories to 25 stories in height (referred to as Buildings A through E). Overall, the Proposed Actions would result in the development of approximately 832 units of affordable housing, approximately 160 units of supportive housing, approximately 46,800 gsf of local retail and commercial space, an approximately 50,500 gsf YMCA facility, and approximately 32,700 gsf of other community facility space (collectively, the "Proposed Project"). The Proposed Project would also include an approximately 209-space accessory underground parking garage (beneath Building B), and approximately 426 spaces of bicycle parking throughout the Project Area. The bicycle spaces would be located in either the cellar or ground floor of each building, with approximately 108 spaces located in Building A, 141 spaces in Building B, 69 spaces in Building C, nine spaces in Building D, and 99 spaces in Building E. In total, approximately 1.26 acres (55,151 sf) of public open space and 1.19 acres (51,906 sf) of private open space would be provided throughout the Project Area. The proposed open space is currently proposed as follows: An approximately 41,002 sf courtyard (32,481 sf public, 8,521 sf private) on Parcel A with grass, trees, plantings, cobblestone pathways, sitting areas, and a playground; an approximately 7,134 sf public skate park on Parcel C, an approximately 7,625 sf public rooftop farm on Parcel B, 7,911 sf of other public open spaces, and a total of approximately 43,385 sf of private rooftop and terrace open space (among all five proposed buildings) for residents.

## BACKGROUND

The Project Area was formerly within the Bronxchester URA, which was established by the Bronxchester Urban Renewal Plan ("BURP") in 1989 (and revised in 1995) in order to redevelop the vacant, substandard, and deteriorated buildings and vacant lots in the Bronxchester URA. Specifically, the objectives of the BURP, among others, were to provide new low and/or moderate income housing exhibiting good design in terms of privacy, light, air and open space; provide convenient community facilities, recreational uses and retail shopping; and redevelop the area in a comprehensive manner, compatible with or beneficial to the surrounding area. The URA was generally bounded by East 156<sup>th</sup> Street on the north, St. Ann's Avenue on the east, East 149<sup>th</sup> Street on the south and Third and Bergen Avenues on the west. The Bronxchester URA was created through a "spin-off" of the South Bronx Neighborhood Development (Urban Renewal) Project and adopted August 17, 1989.

The land use provisions and building requirements of the URP for the northern portion of the Project Area (URA Sites 4, 5 and 6) expired on December 31, 2008. The URP restrictions for Site 7A, which comprises the portion of the Project Area south of Westchester Avenue, expired on March 31, 2015.

A portion of the tax lots comprising the Project Area were mapped as part of East 153<sup>rd</sup> Street, but never improved as a street. In 1974, a portion of East 153<sup>rd</sup> Street between

Bergen Avenue and Brook Avenue was widened from 50 feet to 80 feet and, concomitantly, portions of Block 2361, Lot 26 and Block 2363, Lot 1 were mapped as part of Grove Street, pursuant to CP Report No. 22838, dated November 27, 1974, in conjunction with the South Bronx Model Cities Area. However, East 153<sup>rd</sup> Street was never widened to the mapped width of 80 feet, and remains built at 50 feet wide. The proposed La Central project will maintain the current width of East 153<sup>rd</sup> Street at 50 feet.

A demapped portion of East 152<sup>nd</sup> Street, which is still open to traffic, runs east-west through the central portion of the development site. It is encumbered by a sewer easement mapped by the City of New York in 1974 in conjunction with the Bronxchester URP. The sewer easement is noted on Section 6 of the City Map dated May 1, 1974, which was approved by the New York City Planning Commission pursuant to CP Report No. 22713 on July 10, 1974, and by the New York City Board of Estimate on February 2, 1975, under Plan No. 11919, Calendar No. 10.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND ULURP CERTIFICATION

This application was reviewed pursuant to CEQR and SEQR and received a Positive Declaration. Significant impacts were identified in regards to public school seating, increase in vehicular traffic at one intersection, and increases to pedestrian traffic at two street corners and one crosswalk.

The City Planning Commission referred this application on April 11, 2016.

#### COMMUNITY BOARD PUBLIC HEARING

Bronx Community Board #1 held a public hearing on this application on April 28, 2016. A vote recommending approval of this application had 23 in favor, zero against, and one abstaining with the following conditions: Fifty percent of the units for are set aside for Bronx Community Board #1 residents; a report is provided to Bronx Community Board #1 showing achievement of the unit set aside; regular reports in regards to local hiring; and provision of quarterly project updates.

#### BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S PUBLIC HEARING

The Bronx Borough President held a public hearing on this application on May 17, 2016. Representatives of the applicants were present and spoke in favor of this application. No other members of the public attended and the hearing was closed.

#### BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

La Central is an exemplar proposal that will fill a gaping void that has plagued The Hub for decades. Bronxchester was designated an urban renewal area in 1965. Since then,

project proposals have come and gone without the grand vision presented here. La Central will provide 992 units of mixed-income housing and true mixed-use development in five buildings.

The apartments will serve some of our most needy populations with 160 units of supportive housing run by the team of Breaking Ground and Communilife. The balance of the 832 units will serving residents earning between 40 to 130 percent of area median income (AMI). This project adheres to the newly instituted Mandatory Inclusionary Housing provisions adopted this year by having at least 10 percent of the apartments set aside for residents earning 40 percent AMI and 25 percent set aside for those earning 60 percent AMI in Building A, and 30 percent set aside for those earning 80 percent AMI in Buildings B, C, and E. Twenty-nine of the apartments will have rarely heard of four-bedrooms that provide comfortable opportunities for our larger immigrant populations.

The mix of commercial and community facility uses will make La Central a community within a community. Anchored by a 50,000 square foot YMCA complete with pool, the ground floor will also have 45,000 square feet of retail, a 12,700 square foot BronxNet studio, 9,650 square foot GrowNYC farm, 8,600 square feet for Music Has No Enemies, 8,300 square feet for daycare provider Phyls Academy, 7,300 square feet of office space for Breaking Ground, and 6,100 square feet of community facility space. Topping off the development both spatially and vertically will be a 7,100 square foot Skate Park at the north end of the site, and a telescope on top of the 25-story Bronx Astronomy Tower that will direct live feed shots of space to Bronx High School of Science for student exploration. The Hub is one of The Bronx' busiest shopping districts and the borough's first downtown. These uses will expand its boundaries and enhance the quality of the commercial experience.

The complex aims to achieve Passive House certification for Buildings C and E, LEED Gold certification for Buildings A, B, C and E, and Enterprise Green Communities Certification for all buildings. Hudson Companies has ample experience with Passive House as they are developing the Cornell-Tech residence on Roosevelt Island, which will be the tallest Passive House building in the world. Rooftop panels will generate over 600,000 watts of solar power resulting up to a 50 percent energy savings. The development will provide landscaped common areas both in shared courtyards and portions of the rooftops, which will total almost two acres of open space, with over 41,000 square feet of courtyard space and over 43,000 square feet of rooftop space. This open space includes the aforementioned Skate Park. A bioswale will also be planted along Brook Avenue to deter the impact of water runoff. Finally, the project's design was informed by New York City's Active Design Guidelines.

---

This development will be one of the most transit-oriented in the borough. It will be adjacent to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue-149<sup>th</sup> Street station serving the IRT 2 and 5 trains. The elevated right-of-way emerging from underground will partially serve as the southern site boundary. Mitigation to account for the train is achieved through a generous setback fronted by second floor rooftop open space along the train trestle. The site is also served by the

following bus lines: BX2, 4, 4A, 15, 17, 19, 21, 32, 41, and 41 SBS. The site is also less than a 15-minute walk from the Melrose Metro-North station.

I want to note the level of outreach the development team has given to my office. They set up regular conference calls to discuss the progress of the development and strategized to overcome potential obstacles. The team also quelled my design concerns about the incorporation of light-colored brick face on some of the buildings that clashed with the overall aesthetic of the complex, and replacing it with a warmer color that is more complementary to the neighborhood.

I welcome this diverse, truly mixed-use, transit-oriented development. I am proud to have contributed \$1.5 million towards its development and recommend approval of this application.