

**BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION  
ULURP APPLICATION NO: C 170140 ZMX  
600 East 156<sup>th</sup> Street**

**DOCKET DESCRIPTION**

**IN THE MATTER OF** an application submitted by 600 Associates, LLC pursuant to Section 197-c and 201 of the New York City Charter for the amendment of the Zoning Map, Section No. 6c by changing from an M1-1 District to an R8A District property bounded by Eagle Avenue, East 156<sup>th</sup> Street, Cauldwell Avenue, and a line 100 feet southwesterly of East 156<sup>th</sup> Street, Borough of The Bronx, Community District #1, as shown on a diagram (for illustrative purposes only) dated November 14, 2016.

**BACKGROUND**

Approval of this application will amend the Zoning Map, Section No. 6c (Block 2624, Lot 41) by changing an existing M1-1 District to the proposed R8A District. Currently, the M1-1 District pertains exclusively to Block 2624, Lot 41. This site is located on the south side of East 156<sup>th</sup> Street with 230 feet of frontage, between Eagle Avenue on the West and Cauldwell Avenue on the East. The lot has a depth of 100 feet, yielding 23,000 square feet. A parking lot and parking garage able to accommodate 90 vehicles currently occupies the site. The garage building also accommodates an office.

The remaining lots on Block 2624 are currently zoned R6. Residential zones including R6 and R7X are also in place on adjoining Blocks, including:

Block 2617: R6  
Block 2618: R7X  
Block 2625: R6  
Block 2628: R6  
Block 2629: R6

This proposed R8A District will subsequently facilitate construction of a residential building known as 600 East 156<sup>th</sup> Street. This new building will approximate 211,000 square feet, and offer 179,000 gross square feet of residential floor area. The proposed development will be built to a total of approximately 7.16 FAR, with approximately 6.54 FAR of residential use and approximately 0.62 FAR of community facility use, which will include a charter school accommodating grades K-4. This project site would be designated a Mandatory Inclusionary Housing Area (MIHA).

This proposed building will offer 32,000 square feet of space constructed exclusively for use as a charter school. Due to a substantial grade-change of the site, this school can be accommodated on the cellar and ground floors and offer the required exposure to natural light and air. The height of this proposed building will vary from eight stories located in the mid-block section, 10 stories on its western end adjacent to Eagle Avenue, to a maximum of 12-stories to the east at the

Cauldwell Avenue intersection at East 156<sup>th</sup> Street. Total development cost will approximate \$86.6 million.

### **Residential Component-Access on Cauldwell Avenue**

As proposed, 600 East 156<sup>th</sup> Street will offer 175 units, including:

- 11 studio apartments, averaging 459 square feet, 6.3% of the total units
- 55 one bedroom apartments, averaging 519 square feet, 31.4% of the total units
- 81 two bedroom apartments, averaging 721 square feet, 46.3% of the total units
- 28 three bedroom apartments, averaging 945 square feet, 16% of the total units

Based on the Average Median Income (AMI) of the 175 units to be constructed it is proposed that:

- 18 units at 30%,-Our Space, 10% of the total units
- 18 units at 30% of AMI, 10% of the total units
- 52 units at 50% of AMI, 30% of the total units
- 86 units at 80% of AMI, 50% of the total units
- 1 unit for the superintendent

Amenities to be offered the residents of 600 East 156<sup>th</sup> Street include:

- Community room measuring 1,092 square feet, located on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor
- Outdoor recreation area measuring 1,099 square feet accessible from 9<sup>th</sup> Floor
- Fitness room able to accommodate 11 people, measuring 408 square feet located on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor
- Laundry room located on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor
- Bike storage room able to accommodate 88 bicycles

This building will satisfy Enterprise Green environmental standards. No on-site parking will be provided. This site is located within a Transit Zone.

## **Charter School Component-Access on East 156<sup>th</sup> Street**

Incorporated into the scope of development of 600 East 156<sup>th</sup> Street will be 32,300 square feet of space designed to accommodate a charter school. Access to this school will be available on East 156<sup>th</sup> Street and will be entirely separate from the residential section of this building. Due to the unique topographical characteristics of this site, the proposed school can be located on the cellar and first floor level of the building, while also offering the required ventilation and natural light exposure. Pursuant to a 30-year lease, this school will be operated by Civic Builders Charter Schools and cater to 450 youngsters in grades K-4. Features of this facility include:

- 15 classrooms, plus three rooms allocated for music, dance, and art.
- Administrative offices, nurse's office and teacher lounge area
- A multi-use room composed of 4,500 square feet for use as a gym and auditorium.

The building will operate between 7:00 a.m and 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. It is expected that 50 percent of those students (225 youngsters) attending this school will participate in a breakfast program and arrive at the school by 7:15 a.m. The school day concludes between 4:15-4:20 p.m. with activities continuing up to 6:00 p.m. Monday-Thursday. On Fridays all students depart at 12:30 p.m. It is anticipated that 45 people will hold positions at this new facility. Although no staff parking will be provided, approximately 25 percent of those working at this school will drive.

Existing residential development in the surrounding community includes low-rise, one and two family homes fronting on Eagle Avenue and on Cauldwell Avenue. Mid-rise (four & five stories) residential buildings are located on the south side of East 156<sup>th</sup> Street, west of Eagle Avenue, as a high-rise residential building occupies the northwest corner of Eagle Avenue at East 156<sup>th</sup> Street. Public School 157 is located on the north side of East 156<sup>th</sup> Street, between Eagle Avenue on the west and Cauldwell Avenue to the east.

Subway access via the Nos 2 & 5 trains and bus service are located on Westchester Avenue, approximately three blocks east of the site. Retail activity is also found on Westchester Avenue.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND ULURP CERTIFICATION**

This application has been reviewed pursuant to CEQR and SEQR and received a Negative Declaration, meaning this project poses no threat to the environment. The City Planning Commission certified this application as complete on November 14, 2016.

## **COMMUNITY BOARD PUBLIC HEARING**

Bronx Community Board #1 held a public hearing on this application on January 19, 2017. A vote recommending approval of this application was 21 in favor, zero opposed and two abstaining.

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

The Borough President convened a public hearing on this application on February 1, 2017. Representatives of the applicant were present and spoke in favor of this application. Representatives of SEIU Local 32BJ were also present and offered a written statement which was read at the hearing. A copy of this statement is attached to this recommendation.

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

Development across The Bronx continues to demonstrate a commitment to provide affordable housing to a wide cross section of our borough's population. I take note that 600 East 156<sup>th</sup> Street will offer accommodations to families earning less than 30 percent of Area Median Income (AMI) to as much as 80 percent of AMI. This is to be applauded, as I believe it is essential that we make every effort to integrate neighborhoods based on income, thereby over time, eliminating the stigma so many associate with a low income community. I am also pleased to see that approximately 175 units of housing is to be included and that 46 percent of this total will offer two bedrooms, while 16 percent three bedrooms.

The inclusion of a larger percentage of two and three bedroom units is necessary for our city's families. What is entirely unacceptable are the square foot sizes of all the units to be constructed. Please note the following facts:

- Studio units measuring an average of 459 square feet
- 1-bedroom units measuring an average of 519 square feet
- 2-bedroom units measuring an average of 721 square feet
- 3-bedroom units measuring an average of 945 square feet

It is imperative that the need to maximize the total number of units each building provides NOT be deemed as a rationale for constructing what we should know to be such modest size residences that in past years we would reject such sizes as "substandard." Indeed, when considering that a three bedroom unit will likely accommodate four to five people, (two of which may be teenagers) 945 square feet is oppressively small. I am also aware that these smaller unit sizes are approved by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD). Therefore I believe it is my obligation and prerogative to comment and if necessary recommend as a condition for my approval, larger units be incorporated for all HPD sanctioned projects proposed for The Bronx.

The inclusion of space for a charter school is a unique and pragmatic addition to the development of affordable housing. I am satisfied that this school will be entirely separated from the residential component of this building, while at the same time provide a modern and well-designed facility for both teachers and students.

I recommend approval of this application.



**Testimony of Bryant Brown, SEIU 32BJ  
Testifying in Opposition to 600 East 156th Street Development  
Bronx Borough President Hearing, February 1, 2017**

Good evening. My name is Bryant Brown. I'm here today speaking on behalf of the 70,000 building service workers represented by 32BJ in New York City. 32BJ members maintain, clean and provide security services in residential buildings all across the five boroughs, including ones like the proposed development at 600 East 156<sup>th</sup> Street.

32BJ brings together people from all across the city to fight for buildings and neighborhoods that are affordable and inclusive of all residents and workers. That is why we are here today calling on Phipps to commit to creating good jobs at its proposed new development at 600 East 156<sup>th</sup> Street and across its portfolio.

32BJ members across the city are acutely feeling the rising cost of living in this City. We strongly backed the mayor's plan for affordable housing and support efforts to build more affordable housing in every borough. But we insist that affordable housing does not have to be built at the expense of good building service jobs. Instead, we believe that new housing should also mean new, high-quality jobs for New Yorkers—jobs that pay wages and benefits that allow building service workers to support families in New York City.

As the largest, non-profit affordable housing developer in the City, Phipps can help set this standard for affordable housing development. In the past Phipps did this. At many of its older buildings, workers earn the industry standard prevailing wage, which includes health and retirement benefits. On the other hand, at newer Phipps-developed buildings in the Bronx, workers report earning poverty wages and receiving no benefits from the low-road contractor Phipps uses at the site.

Phipps can and should do better for the Bronx. We are calling on the Borough President to reinforce the Community Board's recommendation that the 600 East 156<sup>th</sup> Street development only move forward after the developer commits to developing a local hire program and to paying building service workers the industry standard wage and benefits package for workers doing similar jobs in the Bronx.

This is an important step towards ensuring that new development truly benefits our neighborhood by creating high quality permanent jobs.

Thank you.