

**BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION  
ULURP APPLICATION NOS: C 190292 HUX, C 190283 HAX  
784 Courtlandt Avenue**

**DOCKET DESCRIPTION**

**C 190292 HUX: IN THE MATTER OF AN APPLICATION** submitted by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), pursuant to Section 505 of Article 15 of the General Municipal (Urban Renewal) Law of New York State and Section 197-c of the New York City Charter, for the fourth amendment to the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan for the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Area, Borough of The Bronx, Community District #1.

**C 190293 HAX: 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 359 East 157<sup>th</sup> Street and 784 Courtlandt Avenue (Block 2404, Lots 1 and 2) 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 properties to a developer to be selected by HPD;

To facilitate construction of a building containing approximately 20 affordable housing units, commercial and community facility space, Borough of The Bronx, Community District #1

**BACKGROUND**

Approving these applications will facilitate development of a seven story mixed use building to be located on the northeast corner of Courtlandt Avenue at East 157<sup>th</sup> Street. This development known as 784 Courtlandt Avenue (Block 2402, Lots 1 and 2, is composed of 4,738 square feet of vacant property. It is bounded by East 158<sup>th</sup> Street to the north, Melrose Avenue to the east, Courtlandt Avenue to the west and East 157<sup>th</sup> Street on the south. The site is zoned R7-2/C1-4 in Bronx Community District #1. This site is referred to as Site 15 in Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan. Those to whom this site was awarded satisfy Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) qualifications as mandated by HPD's Request for Proposal (RFP).

Pursuant to the development of the proposed building, an amendment to the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan is sought (ULURP Application 190292 HUX). This amendment would remove the height restriction of 45-feet on Block 2402, Lot 1. The boundaries of Lot 1 extend 92 feet east from Courtlandt Avenue, on East 157<sup>th</sup> Street, and approximately 25-feet north on Courtlandt Avenue. The proposed building will rise approximate 75-feet along East 157<sup>th</sup> Street.

Residential access and access to the retail venue will be at separate locations on Courtlandt Avenue. Residential access will be at the building's northern most point. Access to the retail location will be at the building's southern end nearest to East 157<sup>th</sup> Street. Access to the community facility will be located directly on East 157<sup>th</sup> Street.

Highlights of the proposed development include:

- Total Development Cost is \$12 million
- Total building square footage is 30,240 square feet
- Seven story residential building offering 18,853 square feet of residential space
- Commercial/retail space:
  - 1,804 square feet on 1<sup>st</sup> floor
  - 600 square feet for storage on cellar level
- Community facility space composed of 4,767 square feet
  - 1,974 square feet on 1<sup>st</sup> floor
  - 2,793 square feet on 2<sup>nd</sup> floor
- Rear outdoor passive recreation space composed of 641 square feet
- Indoor recreation space composed of 625 square feet
- Laundry room compose of 132 square feet
- Bicycle storage for 3-bicycles

Unit Distribution includes:

- 4 One-bedroom units: approximately 588 gross square feet, floors 4-7
- 11 two-bedroom units: approximately 795 gross square feet, floors 3-7  
approximately 784 gross square feet, floor 2
- 5 three-bedroom units: approximately 1,103 gross square feet floors 4-7  
approximately 1,129 gross square feet on floor 2

The affordability of this development includes:

- 2 units at 30% of Area Median Income (AMI)
- 2 units at 50% of AMI
- 12 units at 60% of AMI
- 4 units at 80% of AMI

This building will not employ an on-site superintendent.

This development will satisfy Enterprise Green standards. Pursuant to this designation, an array of solar panels will be installed on the building's roof, which in turn will reduce energy consumption made necessary to illuminate the building's commons areas.

Residential development of the surrounding community is dominated by the Jackson Houses. This development consists of seven, 16-story buildings and includes 868 dwelling units. Jackson Houses is operated by the New York City Housing Authority. Jackson Houses are located on the west side of Courtlandt Avenue, from East 158<sup>th</sup> Street, south to East 156<sup>th</sup> Street. Three family homes and low rise 5-story buildings typify residential development on the east side of Courtlandt Avenue and that which is located on both the east and west sides of Courtlandt Avenue north of East 158<sup>th</sup> Street. Middle School 29 is located on the southeast corner of Courtlandt Avenue at East 157<sup>th</sup> Street. Retail activity is available on Melrose Avenue, one block east of the site and on the east side of Courtlandt Avenue, immediately north of the development site. No subway access is found within a five block radius of the site. Bus transportation via the BX41 and the SBS-BX 41 operate on Melrose Avenue. Additional bus transport operates on East 161<sup>st</sup> Street offering the BX6 and SBS-BX 6. The Melrose Station of Metro North Commuter Railroad is located on Park Avenue at East 162<sup>nd</sup> Street, five blocks north of the development site.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND ULURP CERTIFICATION**

These applications have been reviewed pursuant to CEQR and SEQRA and received a Negative Declaration. The City Planning Commission certified these applications as complete on February 5, 2019.

### **BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD PUBLIC HEARING**

A public hearing on these applications was held on March 29, 2019. A vote recommending these applications be approved with modifications was unanimous, 28 in favor, zero opposed and zero abstaining.

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

A public hearing was convened by the Bronx Borough President on April 9, 2019. Representatives of the applicant were present and spoke in favor of this application. There being no other members of the public present, the hearing was closed.

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

Approximately twenty years ago much of what we now refer to as Melrose Commons was composed of vacant lots and poorly maintained residences. Today this is a thriving community and as I review the details of this proposal I realize that this very modest size site is perhaps one of the few remaining vacant lots.

At the outset I want to commend those associated with this proposal for allocating 80% of the overall number of units as two and three bedrooms. Given that only twenty units will be constructed, this observation takes on more relevance. Still, as is so often the challenge, the overall size of each one and two-bedroom unit are below my minimum square footage requirements.

An additional observation worth noting about 784 Courtlandt Avenue is indeed its modest size. Offering a total of 20-units will allow every resident the opportunity to know just about everyone else living under a shared roof. Residents will become neighbors and neighbors will become friends, and while possible anywhere, it is so much more probable here. Consequently, I urge the developers of this building to do what they can to make this unique place even more special. Common areas need to be designed and furnished akin to what one would find in a home rather than in an institution. This “little building” needs to shine and it is precisely because of its small size that it will. It is also vital that the commercial tenant and community facility allow for ample ambient light and by so doing satisfy the need for maintaining glazing, especially along East 157<sup>th</sup> Street. This will encourage pedestrian activity, attract customers and offer everyone a much greater sense of security.

I recommend approval of this application.