



BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT VANESSA L. GIBSON

**BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION
ULURP APPLICATION NO: C 240206 ZMX
SOJOURNER TRUTH – MAPES REZONING**

DOCKET DESCRIPTION

IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by 2136 Crotona Parkway Housing Development Fund Corporation pursuant to Sections 197-c and 201 of the New York City Charter for an amendment of the Zoning Map, Section No. 3d:

1. eliminating from an existing R7-1 District a C1-4 District bounded by East 182nd Street, Southern Boulevard, East 181st Street, the northeasterly prolongation of a line 150 feet northwesterly of Southern Boulevard, a line 100 feet westerly of Southern Boulevard, a line 100 feet southwesterly of East 182nd Street, and Mapes Avenue;
2. changing from an R7-1 District to an R8 District property bounded by East 182nd Street, Southern Boulevard, Hornaday Place and its northwesterly centerline prolongation, Mohegan Avenue, East 181st Street, the northeasterly prolongation of a line 150 feet northwesterly of Southern Boulevard, a line 100 feet westerly of Southern Boulevard, a line 100 feet southwesterly of East 182nd Street, and Mapes Avenue; and
3. establishing within a proposed R8 District a C2-4 District bounded by East 182nd Street, Southern Boulevard, East 181st Street, the northeasterly prolongation of a line 150 feet northwesterly of Southern Boulevard, a line 100 feet westerly of Southern Boulevard, a line 100 feet southwesterly of East 182nd Street, and Mapes Avenue; as shown on a diagram (for illustrative purposes only) dated May 11, 2026, and subject to the conditions of CEQR Declaration E-897.

Related application: N 240207 ZRX

BACKGROUND

This project is located in the West Farms neighborhood of Community District 6 in the Central Bronx. Development of the surrounding community is characterized by a mix of residential uses, with a commercial corridor located along East Tremont Avenue. Land uses in the area consist of a mix of multistory, walk-up apartment buildings, multifamily attached and semi-attached houses, and neighborhood serving retail uses. The tallest building in the neighborhood is the 30-story Twin Parks South East building. Transit options serving this area include numerous bus lines such as the Bx9, Bx19, Bx36, Bx40, and Bx42. The closest subway lines are the 2 and 5 trains located approximately ½ mile to the southeast at West Farms Sq-E Tremont Av. The project site is served

by local parks such as Mapes Park and Vidalia Park and is located approximately one block south of the Bronx Zoo. There are also several community gardens in the vicinity. Nearby public schools include PS 57, PS 67, PS X188, and the School of Science and Applied Learning.

The proposed Rezoning Area includes Block 3119, Lots 37 and 44; and Block 3111, Lots 55, 59, 65, 69, 71, 76, 79, 82, 85 and a portion of Lot 49. The Sojourner Truth redevelopment site is on a Block that is bounded by Hornaday Place to the north, Mohegan Avenue to east, East 181st Street to the south and Crotona Parkway to the west. The Mapes Court Redevelopment Site is on a block that is bounded by East 182nd Street to the north, Southern Boulevard to the east, East 181st Street to the south, and Mapes Avenue to the west. The Sojourner Truth Redevelopment Site has a lot area of approximately 20,482 square feet, and the Mapes Court Redevelopment Site has a lot area of approximately 42,743 square feet.

The Proposed Development site consists of two sites split by Southern Boulevard and Crotona Parkway, and consist of Block 3111, Lots 45, 55, 59, 65, and 69, as well as Block 3119, Lots 37 and 44. The Sojourner site is currently an R7-1 zoning district and would be changed to an R8 zoning district while the Mapes site and several neighboring parcels are currently R7-1/C1-4 and would be changed to an R8/C2-4 zoning district – with the exact dimensions noted in the docket. The current R7-1 allows for a maximum residential FAR of 3.44 (beyond 100 feet of a wide street), 4.0 (within 100 feet of a wide street), or 5.01 for qualifying affordable or senior housing. R8 districts are medium-density residential districts. R8 districts permit a maximum FAR of 6.02 for standard residences, up to 7.2 for qualifying affordable or senior housing, or up to 8.64 for qualifying affordable or senior housing outside of MIH areas on a wide street.

The Sojourner Truth redevelopment site previously contained a five-story, 66-unit supportive housing building, but the site is currently vacant. The Mapes Court redevelopment site currently contains two five-story apartment buildings with a total of 91 units on Lots 49, 65, and 69 (the existing Mapes Court buildings), a one-story commercial building on Lot 55, and a vacated gas station on Lot 59. Additional land uses within the rezoning area include a car wash, two churches, and a parking lot.

The proposed development on the Project Site would include two new residential buildings containing a total of approximately 430,182 zoning square feet (ZSF) [455,454 gross square feet (GSF)]. The buildings will be built in two phases; the first phase building will be constructed on the Sojourner Truth Redevelopment Site (the “Sojourner Truth Building”) and the second phase building will be constructed on the Mapes Court Redevelopment Site (the “Mapes Court Building”). The Sojourner Truth Building would range in heights from 8- to 16-stories and would contain a total of 153,036 ZSF of floor area (161,826 GSF) with a total of 159 affordable units and residential amenity space. The majority of the units, 91 units, would be used to relocate the existing Mapes Court tenants. The Mapes Court Building would range in height from 6- to 14-stories and would contain a total of 277,146 ZSF (293,628 GSF) including approximately 260,588 ZSF of residential floor area and 15,206 ZSF of community facility floor area located on the ground floor along Southern boulevard and East 182nd Street. The residential component of the building would include 298 units of affordable family housing and approximately 3,100 square feet of residential amenity space.

The Proposed Development will offer a total of 457 rental units of affordable housing (including 2 superintendent units), with the distribution as follows:

AMI Range:	Sojourner Truth:	Mapes Court:	Total:
Formerly Homeless	--	45	45
40%	--	89	89
60%	--	119	119
80%	150*	44	194
110%	9	--	9
Total:	159	298	457

*Includes 91 units reserved for current Mapes Court tenants

Unit Type:	Sojourner Truth: (number and %)	Mapes Court: (number and %)	Total: (number and %)
Studio	10 – 6% of units	29 – 10% of units	39 - 9% of all units
1 BR	50 – 31%	103 – 35%	153 - 33%
2 BR	70 – 44%	134 – 45%	204 – 45%
3 BR	29 – 18%	32 – 11%	61 – 13%
Total	159	298	457

For all units, the development offers income-restricted housing for Area Median Income (AMI) bands of 40%, 60%, 80%, and 110% with rents ranging from \$1,130 to \$2,920. Additionally, a portion of the units will be reserved for formerly homeless individuals. Approximately 60% of the units are two- and three-bedrooms with unit sizes ranging from approximately 400 square feet for a studio to 910 square feet for a three-bedroom. Approximately 30% of the units will be income-restricted pursuant to Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) requirements.

Amenities to be provided in each building of the Proposed Development include:

- Laundry rooms
- Bike rooms
- Fitness facilities
- Children’s playrooms
- Concierge
- Outdoor recreation space

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND ULURP CERTIFICATION

This application has been reviewed pursuant to SEQR and CEQR and received a Negative Declaration (26DCP113X). The City Planning Commission certified this application as complete on May 11, 2026.

BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD HEARING

A public hearing was convened by Bronx Community Board 6 on May 27, 2026. A vote was held with 18 votes against with none in favor and no abstentions, resulting in an unfavorable recommendation. The primary reason cited by the Board for their recommendation included a negative history with another project owned and managed by Phipps at the Lambert Houses.

BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT’S PUBLIC HEARING

On June 15, 2026, a virtual public hearing was convened by the Bronx Borough President. Representatives of the applicant were in attendance and spoke in favor of this application. One member of the public was in attendance and spoke in opposition to the project.

BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT’S RECOMMENDATION

As New York City continues to face a housing crisis, I will continue to seek out and uplift opportunities to create affordable housing that meets the needs of Bronx residents. Rezoning represents one of many tools at our disposal to create opportunities for development across the city which can facilitate new affordable housing.

With that said, for this project, I echo many of the concerns that Community Board 6 flagged in their recommendation, and will only offer support for this project should the following conditions be met:

1. The applicant, Phipps, has not always had the best track record in this community, specifically, the issues raised at the Community Board 6 public hearing regarding management concerns at Lambert Houses. Issues over how the prior transferring of residents between buildings occurred as well as the recertification process for Section 8 vouchers have instilled management concerns with residents. Community Board 6 noted that only 60% of tenants were up to date on their recertifications. In order to restore good faith with residents, Phipps must do better.

My recommendation will require that Phipps work to regain the trust of residents at Lambert Houses by providing residents with timelines that provide a path for meeting recertification deadlines. This can be done by providing specific guidance as part of the 120-, 90-, and 60-day noticing letters that are sent to residents, so that residents understand the amount of lead-time that must be given to Phipps management to meet HUD recertification deadlines. Additionally, if residents miss their deadlines then an additional “late” notice must be provided to ensure residents are aware of the urgent need to file their paperwork early enough to still get processed in time. It is worth noting that Phipps acts as a “middleman” between residents and HUD for recertifications, so the paperwork must be complete before it can be sent and processed at HUD, which can take some time. Phipps needs to ensure residents understand this timeline to avoid any lapses.

This will require Phipps to hire additional staff to meet this requirement, as the expansion of Lambert Houses from approximately 730 units to nearly 1,670 units will result in increased demands on management. I understand Phipps has made progress and has now completed 97% of recertifications, but we must ensure this continues as this recertification process is ongoing. If residents are provided this amount of guidance and are still not meeting their recertification requirements, then management has met their due diligence requirement and some responsibility must fall onto the residents to get their paperwork in on time and with enough lead time for it to be processed through HUD.

I note that the recertification process is not specifically a Phipps issue, as we have seen this problem across The Bronx and are working with other management teams to resolve when it is brought to my attention. I am pleased to note that Phipps has already made the following staffing changes to support the residents and improve the recertification process at Lambert Houses:

- Hired a new property manager (replacement) with recertification experience;
 - Hired a new tenant liaison (additional staffing) to focus on recertifications;
 - Hired a new case manager (additional staffing) to work with tenants;
 - Providing weekly lobby hours for residents in the 2080 Boston Road building.
2. For the new Sojourner building, which will receive the transfer of the 91 existing Mapes Court building households, residents must be provided guidance on the transfer process. Whether this is done in a public meeting or in individual meetings, all 91 households will need to be properly informed to ensure there is not a communication breakdown, including providing a point-person that can be contacted if any of the residents have an issue. While residents will benefit from receiving a brand-new apartment, no one should have to experience an undue burden from the move or feel the process is overly demanding. Phipps must ensure they are doing everything they can to support residents during the transfer process, which can be a very sensitive and emotional process for some.
 3. Across Hornaday Place from the Sojourner Truth building is the Hornaday Community Garden, a neighborhood asset operated by local volunteers and supported through the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation's GreenThumb program. The proposed development is located immediately south of the garden and will cast shadows onto portions of the space. While shadow impacts would occur under both the proposed rezoning and an as-of-right development permitted under the existing zoning, the applicant's request for additional height and bulk must be accompanied by corresponding community benefits.

Accordingly, Phipps must engage directly with the Hornaday Community Garden and its volunteers to identify resources and investments that can support the long-term health and sustainability of the garden. This engagement must be ongoing and conducted in good faith, recognizing the garden's importance to the surrounding community. Through continued collaboration, the applicant and garden stakeholders should explore opportunities to establish a mutually beneficial relationship that supports both the garden's volunteers and the future residents of the development.

4. Regarding the ground-floor opportunities for the Mapes Court development, which will include approximately 15,000 square feet of community facility space, I would strongly support the development of a local community center within the community facility space, as the West Farms neighborhood currently lacks one. However, I also recognize that a successful community center must be purpose-built and designed with that use in mind from the outset. Parks Commissioner Shimamura recently noted that only 5% of Bronx neighborhoods have access to recreation services, underscoring the continued need for additional community recreational space in neighborhoods such as West Farms. If a community center is ultimately not feasible within this development, I strongly recommend that the community facility space be programmed for early childhood education or childcare services to address another critical community need.
5. My final recommendation for Phipps is that they must commit to hiring union labor for staffing the developments. The current staff at the existing Mapes Court building is organized through 32BJ, and that staff must be retained and moved to the Sojourner Truth building when the transition occurs. When the new Mapes Court building is built, 32BJ staff must be retained or hired to support that building as well.
6. Additionally, I agree with Community Board 6 that this proposal represents a missed opportunity to create affordable homeownership opportunities, whether through cooperatives or condominiums. However, the current affordable homeownership programs available at the City and State levels are inadequate to support developments of this nature. While this recommendation is not directed at Phipps, I urge the City and State to develop and adequately fund new affordable homeownership programs that can be effectively incorporated into future housing developments.

Phipps cannot reasonably be expected to create or finance such programs, and the limited homeownership initiatives that currently exist often fail to provide the long-term financial stability necessary for sustainable homeownership. In some cases, these programs leave homeowners financially vulnerable when buildings require significant repairs or capital improvements, ultimately requiring additional public subsidies to address those challenges. Additionally, financing remains a significant barrier to affordable homeownership. Because many affordable homeownership developments include resale restrictions, affordability requirements, or other programmatic conditions, lenders may be more cautious in underwriting mortgages, making it more difficult for qualified purchasers to obtain financing and for future owners to resell their units. The City and State should expand underwriting support, loan guarantees, down payment assistance, and other financing tools that reduce lender risk while ensuring qualified buyers have access to affordable mortgage products. Affordable homeownership programs must be structured to promote long-term housing stability and financial security, rather than placing homeowners in situations where they are set up to struggle financially due to shortcomings in the program design.

These are my conditions for supporting the project. I also want to acknowledge that the proposed Sojourner Truth and Mapes Court buildings align with many of my guiding principles for new residential development. Most notably, nearly 60 percent of the proposed units are family-sized,

which is a significant achievement and an important benefit for the neighborhood. Providing larger units allows families to remain in their communities as their households grow, rather than being displaced in search of larger housing elsewhere. This helps foster long-term neighborhood stability, strengthens community ties, and supports the creation of more family-oriented communities.

It is also important to recognize the tradeoff associated with this rezoning. Compared to an as-of-right development under the existing zoning, the proposed rezoning would permit approximately 200 additional housing units across the two buildings. Without the requested rezoning, it is reasonable to expect that Phipps would need to modify the unit mix to maximize the number of units that could be constructed under the existing zoning, likely resulting in fewer family-sized units. By approving the rezoning, the City is not only facilitating the creation of additional affordable housing but is also preserving a development program that provides a substantially greater share of larger units for families. In my view, this represents a meaningful planning outcome that better serves the long-term needs of the community.

While the tallest portion of the two proposed buildings is taller than much of the surrounding neighborhood at 16- and 14-stories, the buildings step down while incorporating setback and articulation features that add visual appeal. None of the buildings will be as tall as the 30-story Twin Parks South East building located two blocks south. Additionally, these buildings do not look like traditional affordable housing, as they are designed as high-quality buildings that use high-quality materials. Both buildings will add Passive House design standards, will meet solar and green roof requirements, and will be fully electric buildings to ensure they are energy efficient and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Overall, this project stands to bring 457 units of affordable housing for a range of income levels. As there is tremendous need for new, affordable housing in The Bronx, we must ensure that any new development is of maximum benefit to both the new residents and the surrounding community alike. I believe this project offers great potential to support families over the long-term.

I would not ordinarily have such reservations for a project of this quality. However, given the concerns that were raised by the community, Phipps must do better to guarantee that these new developments, as well as their portfolio of existing developments, continue to support the residents they house. Phipps is the oldest and largest not-for-profit affordable housing provider in New York City and it is important that they continue to support the communities they serve. I believe the good faith efforts made by Phipps to resolve the issues at Lambert Houses are a step in the right direction, and I am confident that they will continue to support the residents over time.

Therefore, I recommend approval of this application only with the aforementioned conditions being met.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Vanessa L. Gibson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Vanessa" being the most prominent part.

Vanessa L. Gibson
Bronx Borough President