

BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION
ULURP APPLICATION NO: C 050001 MMX
West 169th Street De-Mapping
April 15, 2010

DOCKET DESCRIPTION

IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by Roc-Sedgwick, LLC and the Trust under the Will of Robert S. Olnick, pursuant to Sections 197-c and 199 of the New York City Charter, and Section 5-430 *et seq.* of the New York City Administrative Code, for an amendment of the City Map involving:

- The elimination, discontinuance and closing of West 169th Street between Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Major Deegan Boulevard,

including authorization for any acquisition or disposition of real property related thereto, in Community District 4, Borough of The Bronx, in accordance with Map No. 13106, dated April 25, 2007, and signed by the Borough President.

BACKGROUND

Approving this application facilitates the demapping of West 169th Street between Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard (MLK Boulevard) on the east and Sedgwick Avenue on the west. This portion of West 169th Street is unimproved, situated on a slope of more than 25 percent and mapped at a width of 30 feet. This street bed is in an R7-1 zone and is located in Bronx Community District 4.

With the exception of a service station located on Block 2530, Lots 32 and 39, the applicant owns Block 2530, Lots 1, 51, 25, plus Block 2533, Lots 1, 6, 7, 116, 118, 120. Demapping of West 169th Street, yields 161,013 square feet of vacant, undeveloped property. The boundaries of this contiguous lot include MLK Boulevard on the east, Sedgwick Avenue on the west, West 168th Street on the south and the Highbridge Park step street on the north.

The applicant seeks eventual as-of-right development of this site pursuant to an R7-1 zone. Preliminary plans feature construction of two high rise buildings, the tallest being 14 stories. Mid-rise residences are also envisioned. The anticipated project will offer a grand total of 505 individual dwelling units, garden areas and an on-site parking garage with 304 spaces. The development will yield 505,748 square feet of proposed floor area.

Development of the surrounding community includes midrise residential buildings, a public park (Highbridge Park) north of the site, Public School 11 two blocks east of the site. A police station and motel are situated on Sedgwick Avenue. There is no access to subway transportation within a five block radius of the site. Bus service and retail activity are available on Ogden Avenue, two blocks east of MLK Boulevard. The site overlooks the Major Deegan Expressway (Interstate 87) and the historic Highbridge that links Manhattan to the Bronx over the Harlem River.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND ULURP CERTIFICATION

This application has been reviewed pursuant to SEQR and CEQR and is noted as unlisted. The City Planning Commission certified this application as complete on January 4, 2010.

COMMUNITY BOARD PUBLIC HEARING

Bronx Community Board 4 held a public hearing on this application on March 23, 2010. A non-complying vote recommending approval of this matter was 15 in favor, two against and four abstaining.

BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S PUBLIC HEARING

The Bronx Borough President convened a public hearing on March 23, 2010. Representatives of the applicant were present and spoke in favor of this application. No other members of the public offered testimony and the hearing on this matter was closed.

BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION

The Highbridge community in the Bronx includes some of the borough's steepest terrain. For example, to access subway service many residents must walk multiple blocks, including step streets. This area is bounded by the Cross Bronx Expressway on the north, the Harlem River on the west, Jerome Avenue on the east and West 162nd Street on the south. This application considers the demapping of an unbuilt portion of West 169th Street, which because of its topography, is not suitable for service as a functioning street.

This action as presented by the applicant at my public hearing is to facilitate the eventual as-of-right development of approximately 161,000 square feet of privately owned, contiguous vacant property for residential purposes. To this end, the applicant offered a preliminary plan for this site, featuring approximately 505,000 square feet of residential space and a garage facility offering 304 spaces. Given this information, the total permitted FAR is 548,000 square feet. If a community use facility is included within the scope of development, the FAR substantially increases to 772,800 square feet, yielding an additional 224,800 square feet.

The magnitude of this proposal raises a variety of concerns. The most important being the impact of any new large scale residential development on the severe shortage of middle school seats serving Highbridge. Currently there are five elementary schools within the area, providing a seating capacity of 3,930. The current lack of a middle school forces every one of these students to traverse the hilly streets of Highbridge and travel by bus or subway to middle schools, all of which are beyond one mile from their homes. I acknowledge that the Department of Education is anticipating the opening of a middle school for Highbridge by 2013. However, with a seating capacity of 389, it is clear that this new facility will not sufficiently mitigate the profound shortage of seats that now exists.

I therefore recommend that as a condition for my approval of this matter, the applicant agree to work with the Department of Education and my office and Community Board 4, to include community facility space for a middle school, be it an on-site complex, or a free standing building on the property. A middle school serving six hundred students requires 90,000 square feet. An annex building serving four hundred students requires 55,000 square feet. My office will be pleased to work with the applicant and the Department of Education on this matter.

With my modification so noted, I recommend approval of this application.