

**BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION**  
**ULURP NO: C 090189 MMX**  
**Grant Avenue Park Demapping**  
**June 11, 2014**

**DOCKET DESCRIPTION**

**IN THE MATTER OF** an application submitted by the Department of Parks and Recreation 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 a portion of Grant Avenue between East 169<sup>th</sup> Street and East 170<sup>th</sup> Street; and
- The establishment of Grant Park bounded by East 169<sup>th</sup> Street, East 170<sup>th</sup> Street , Sheridan Avenue and Morris Avenue; and
- The adjustment of grades necessitated thereby;

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. 13125 dated September 27, 2013, and signed by the Borough President.

**BACKGROUND**

Approving this application facilitates an essential mapping process initiated in the 1980's. At that time, the City of New York and the New York Yankees commenced discussion regarding construction of a future Yankee Stadium. Given the possibility that a new stadium would require the alienation of mapped parkland, the City identified vacant property located on Grant Avenue between East 169<sup>th</sup> and East 170<sup>th</sup> Streets as compensating for any loss of park property within Bronx Community District #4. The distance however, between Yankee Stadium and the proposed Grant Avenue Park prompted the city to drop this location as an appropriate "swap" pursuant to any Yankee Stadium development plan, although the vision for a park remained viable.

In 1995 property located on the east and west sides of Grant Avenue, between East 169<sup>th</sup> and East 170<sup>th</sup> Streets was transferred to the Department of Parks and Recreation. This property consisting of 3.85 acres had previously been the site of mid-rise residential buildings, which during the 1970's and 80's were abandoned and subsequently razed. This application considers the mapping of all the property identified for this park, a significant portion of which is located in the bed of Grant Avenue. Grant Avenue runs north-south, the bed of which is 60 feet in width.

The proposed Grant Avenue Park includes Blocks 2816 and 2830, Lots 5, 9, 13, 18, 22, 26, 30, 32, 37, 41, 44, 48, 52, 57, 62 72, in addition to that which comprises the bed of Grant Avenue.

An initial build-out of this park completed approximately 10 years ago provides for a children's playground located on the northwest corner of East 169<sup>th</sup> Street at Grant Avenue. An additional build-out includes property located on the southeast corner of East 170<sup>th</sup> Street at Grant Avenue. A community garden, named the Dred Scott Bird Sanctuary, is situated on the east side of Grant Avenue approximately 50 feet north of East 169<sup>th</sup> Street. The remaining lots are vacant and undeveloped while the bed of Grant Avenue consists of a paved venue lined by sidewalks. Once completed, Grant Avenue Park will include passive and active recreational facilities, a dog run, comfort station, an adult exercise area, courts for both handball and basketball, an amphitheater and spray showers. At this time there are no funds available for construction of these features.

Development of the surrounding community includes mid-rise residential accommodations fronting on Sheridan Avenue on the west, with mid-rise and low-rise residences fronting on Morris Avenue to the east. Commercial activity and bus transportation are accessible on East 170<sup>th</sup> Street. Taft High School is sited on the north side of East 170<sup>th</sup> Street where Grant Avenue terminates. Subway access is found on the Grand Concourse at East 170<sup>th</sup> Street, approximately two blocks west of the proposed Grant Avenue Park.

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

This application was reviewed pursuant to SEQR and CEQR and received a Negative Declaration, meaning that the proposed action will have no impact on the environment. The City Planning Commission certified this application as complete on March 3, 2014.

#### **BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD PUBLIC MEETING**

Bronx Community Board #4 held a public hearing on this application on April 22, 2014. A unanimous vote recommending approval of this application was 29 in favor, zero opposed and zero abstaining.

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

A public hearing was convened by the Bronx Borough President on June 3, 2014. Representatives of the applicant were present and spoke in favor of this application. No other members of the public were present and the public hearing was closed.

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

The genesis of this application commenced approximately 20 years ago. At that time discussion associated with a future vision for Yankee Stadium included the taking of park property on the north side of East 161<sup>st</sup> Street for development of a new stadium. Garage facilities would occupy the site of the original stadium. Fortunately, the City of New York and this office were able to preserve the footprint of the old stadium as parkland and build athletic facilities over adjacent parking garages to create a vast new recreational venue for the community and the plan to swap

the Grant Avenue site for the alienated parkland became moot. The Grant Avenue Park plan, however, endured.

Overall, a total of approximately \$6.9 million is dedicated to the first phase of constructing Grant Avenue Park. Of this total, \$4.9 million is provided through Croton capital funding. These funds financed the two existing park areas now in place. This includes the children's playground located on East 169<sup>th</sup> Street and the open space component located on East 170<sup>th</sup> Street. The remaining balance of \$2 million, as allocated by Council Member Maria del Carmen Arroyo, will finance the anticipated construction of the pathway and recreational field. I am distressed to know, however, that based on the most timely approximations an additional \$1 million will be needed to fully fund this anticipated construction.

The challenge remaining is to identify the costs and required monies that will bring about the completed vision for this park. This scope includes areas for active recreation such as a basketball court, spray showers for hot weather relief, a restroom and an adult exercise venue. I am concerned however, that as time passes and anticipated expenses rise, various components of this project will have to be eliminated. Consequently, a grand vision for a comprehensive park will be compromised. I therefore propose that the DPR develop a definitive time-line that includes the anticipated costs associated with the full construction of Grant Avenue Park and when these additional phases can be constructed.

I recommend approval of this application.