



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD 10

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Joint Land Use/Landmarks And Housing Committee

Thursday, December 19, 2013 6:30 PM

215 West 125th Street, 3rd Floor Conference Room

Hon. Brian Benjamin, Land Use Chair
Hon. Austin Smith, Land Use Co-Chair
Hon. Betty Dubuisson, Landmarks Chair

Hon. Melvin Christian, Housing Chair
Hon. Barbara Nelson, Housing Co-Chair

Attendance: Brian Benjamin, Melvin Christian, Keith Taylor, Pamela Bates, Betty Dubuisson, Daniel Parcerisas, Maria Garcia, Keith Taylor, Forrest Taylor, Stanley Gleaton, Donna Gill.

- 1) Welcome/Introductions
- 2) Presentations
 - a. **Azimuth Development Group, Inc.** – Proposed development project at 2803-2805 Frederick Douglass Blvd.

This is a voting item.

The developer owns a 25ft-wide by 80ft-deep parcel at 2805 Frederick Douglass Boulevard, between 149th Street and 150th Street (on the West side of the boulevard). The contiguous parcel -2803 Frederick Douglass Boulevard- is owned by HPD, has the same dimensions and occupies the Northwest corner of Frederick Douglass Boulevard and 149th Street. Both parcels are currently vacant and the developer is seeking approval to acquire HPD's parcel to develop both parcels into housing and commercial space.

The developer's proposal is to build three three-story townhouses fronting 149th Street, which he states is less than what is permitted under the area's zoning. The second and third floor of each townhouse would be a 3 bedroom/2 bathroom duplex apartment (kitchen and living room on the 2nd floor and three bedrooms on the third floor). The ground floor of the corner townhouse would

be used for commercial space, while the ground floors of the two other townhouses would be 1-bedroom units. There would also be a back yard accessible from each duplex unit.

The 1-bedroom units would be slightly under 1,000 sq ft in size and the duplex apartments would be about 2,000 sq ft (approximately 1,000 sq ft per floor). The developer anticipates selling these townhouses for \$695,000, which would allow the homeowner to live in the duplex and get rental income from the 1-bedroom to help pay the mortgage. The target buyer is a household with a total income of around \$80,000. The developer suggests that with a 3% down payment (\$20,850), 5.5% mortgage interest rate and \$1200 in rental income, mortgage payments would be \$2800 per month.

HPD has not put out an RFP for this lot. Instead, the owner has approached HPD about acquiring it. HPD has no plans for the lot and states that it is undevelopable due to its small size. HPD and the developer have not entered into any negotiations regarding the price of the acquisition but the developer is asking to acquire it free of charge in order to maintain the target pricing. HPD would enter into a regulatory agreement which would require, among other things, that the properties need to be owner-occupied (i.e. they could not be sold as investment properties).

The developer presents the committee with renderings of the proposed design, which is mindful of the neighborhood character. The Committee debates the merits of the project and expresses some skepticism that these units would be available to households earning \$80,000, but agrees the pricing is accessible to middle class households seeking homeownership opportunities, particularly when collecting rental income.

The Committee votes to approve the proposal by 8 yes votes and 1 abstention.

b. **Abyssinian Development Corporation update**

- i. 123rd Street Development
- ii. Ennis Francis on 124th Street

This is a non-voting item.

The CEO of Abyssinian Development Corporation agreed to attend this Committee meeting in order to explain the situation at Ennis Francis Houses on 124th Street and the stalled development site at 123rd Street. Ennis Francis has 60 low rise units which are in very bad shape and in need of large-scale repairs, as many residents attested. ADC's plan is to build a high rise on the parking lot of the Ennis Francis homes on 123rd Street and move the tenants there while it fixes the low rise buildings. This project has run into financial troubles which have caused the

project to be stalled for the past 9 months. ADC explained they split up with their original partner on the project and that they are seeking a new partner to finish it. They are in conversations with potential partners and hope to restart work in February 2014 and finalize it by February 2015. The work is currently 70-75% completed, according to ADC.

In the meantime, residents of the low rises are complaining that few, if any, repairs are taking place and that they have mold, mice, roaches, leaks and no heat, among other conditions. ADC says it looked into relocating the tenants but could not find affordable units to do so. Neighbors on 123rd Street also attended the meeting and testified that the stalled construction site is a magnet for crime and urged ADC to finish the development. ADC stated there is a new management team in place that will ensure that basic repairs take place while they work on securing the financing to complete the development. Some of this work has already started, specifically around mold remediation, fixing the sewers and ensuring there is heat (many tenants complained they did not have heat last winter). In January ADC will start fixing the walls and apartment interiors based on the work needed in each apartment.

Regarding the new development, ADC states that its partner remains the same and that they are committed to the project. They also stated that there is a security company overseeing the premises, although residents claimed they have not seen any evidence of this. The residents say that ADC has been unwilling to meet and secretive about its office's location and contact information, and that this has created a bad environment on the block.

ADC acknowledges that they have not communicated well with their tenants or the neighbors and made a commitment to improve communication. This includes attending CB10's Land Use, Landmarks and Housing Committee meetings every two months to report on their progress. Tenants are asked to also attend these meeting also so that they can verify whether there have in fact been repairs and improvements.

CB 10 voted a resolution in support of ADC's Large Scale Development Plan on September 1, 2010, subject to certain conditions that included the provision of written financing, development and safety/security plans:

http://www.nyc.gov/html/mancb10/downloads/pdf/ennis_francis_resolution.pdf

3) Questions and Answers

4) Announcements

- A large neon storage sign has gone up at the SE corner of Adam Clayton Powell Jr. and 125th Street.

- There is a public hearing on January 6th at the State Office Building on the relocation of the Post Office at 140th Street and Frederick Douglass Boulevard.

- Members of this Committee should keep an eye for unauthorized work and signage in the landmarked districts and notify LPC of any suspected violations.

- There is a Harlem hike guided by author Eric K. Washington on Saturday 1/25 at 11am from Hotel Olga to Sugar Hill.

- Kwanzaa celebration on 12/28 from 12pm-4pm at the House of Justice, 106 West 145th Street, organized by the Disability and Political Action Committees of the National Action Network's NYC Chapter.

5) Adjournment