



# BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD #1

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DISTRICT MANAGER

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT-LAND USE & HOUSING NOVEMBER 15, 2012

### MINUTES

**Attendance:** Arline Parks, Carol Boddie, Betty Bryant, Maura Cosme, Gloria Cruz, Linda Duke, Michael Gilbert, A. Mychal Johnson, Betty Wessley, Tracy Woodall, Delores Waller Worrell.

### **Phipps Houses**

Mr. Adam Weinstein, President & CEO said that we wanted to come in and be a good neighbor and talk about a development that we are proposing on property we acquired from a private owner which used to be a railroad cut it's that big trench that runs all the way up to St. Mary's Park out to Port Morris then all the way up to 163<sup>rd</sup> Street and used to connect to the Metro North line. This is an unusual site in that it combines that larger piece of property with a very small triangular slice of city-owned property that HPD controls. To combine the two sites it may not appear that the city-owned property is city-owned property it just looks like a large slice of sidewalk. Across East 156<sup>th</sup> Street Phipps developed a building called Via Verde that you were kind enough to give your support for and it's now occupied. We've come up with a design that we think echo's elements of Via Verde but we want to create just an imitation and we hope you think it's respectful of the neighborhood and brings needed affordable housing which my organization is solely devoted to doing to this long dirty and blighted site.

What we are here I think to do this is not ULURP. There will be a series of ULURP actions that will come to you formally. This is an informal meeting looking for a letter of support for our proposed development. A non-committal non binding letter of support so will take that into consideration in the disposition at City Planning when and if we get into the formal ULURP process.

The Chairperson mentioned that Phipps Houses had met with Melrose Commons Board Members on this project to address any issues of concern that they had.

Mr. Weinstein said that it was the best neighboring home owner meeting that he has ever been too because everyone came with constructive suggestions the chief of which we spent two – thirds of the time talking about the fact that the cooperative has for years been using the triangle portion of the site to put out their garbage. The concern was what do we do about storage of garbage on trash day and as we develop our plans we committed to come up with what I call a shared solution. The homeowner association needs the Department of Sanitation to pick up their garbage and its put curbside. There's a logical place that we would put our refuse for DOS pickup as well. No one really wants garbage in an open location. So our objective is to come up with a means by which we could commonly store garbage in a gated area and DOS could have a common place in which to pickup.

The second matter of concern for the homeowners was a complication involving where to put the building on this triangular site. In simple terms there is a scheme in which the building could have been located closer to the property line that we share with the neighboring property owner or a more complicated scheme under which we push the building out towards Brook Avenue. We favor that scheme we think it's a better plan Brook Avenue is a wide street and the homeowners agree moving the building away from their property to Brook Avenue would be preferable.

The third matter was we'd shown a scheme that indicated an eleven-story building and at the end of the meeting we were asked to consider reducing the height of the building and we've addressed that and have come back with a nine-story building which we think fits under the zoning that we would propose to you Department of City Planning and HPD.

Mr. Bill Stein, Architect said we're working on Phipps Houses on this project and also Via Verde. He explained the drawing designs of the proposed project.

It is a nine-story building we're proposing with forty-two apartments this is not a final design but our initial proposal ten units or 24 percent one-bedrooms, 25 units two-bedrooms roughly 60 percent, and 7 units three-bedrooms roughly 17 percent with a total of 42 apartments. In addition there will be a community room on the ground floor as well as a common laundry room.

One enters the building through Brook Avenue into the vestibule into the lobby directly across the lobby are two elevators as well as the stairs. On the ground floor two one-bedroom apartments a common laundry room another apartment which might be the superintendents and a community room which would have access to the courtyard. On the second floor through the eight floor which we call a typical floor because their all the same one gets off the elevator and basically you have apartments all the way around. At the northern most end of the site you its'

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three-bedrooms then two-bedrooms, two bedrooms and a one-bedroom. Interesting thing about this design is that because the site is so shallow we don't have apartments on both sides of the corridor called a single loaded corridor. The building will be fully accessible to the handicapped. We anticipate this being a green building as well. The ninth floor is what we call a setback floor where we have apartments but the green portion at the north end is either a greenroom or roof terrace for use by the residents.

We're just in the early design phases but we wanted to give you an idea of what we're envisioning what this building might look like so we prepared a rendering. We think it's handsome and something that compliments Via Verde but it has its own unique identity we think it will be a real asset to the community.

What we're going to be looking for with the concurrence of HPD and the Department of City Planning is a zoning change. The site is currently zoned R72 and that has certain limitations and what we're looking for is R8 district which is comparable to the zoning for Via Verde which allows a slightly higher building. We truly believe that the nine-story building is compatible in scale with the overall surroundings and appropriate from an urban design and urban planning point of view. A smaller building would have much fewer units and in terms of the financing construction costs and operationally becomes much less feasible to develop that type of building. So we think this is what works well for the community and the residents.

### **Questions and Answers**

Motion made to provide Phipps Houses with a letter of support on their proposed development project on Brook Avenue corner of East 156<sup>th</sup> Street with the stipulation that they continue an ongoing dialogue with the Melrose Commons Condominium Board and homeowners. Motion duly seconded. Called and passed with 9-yes, 2-opposition and 1-abstention.

### **Adjournment**