

**BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION
ULURP APPLICATION NOS: C 180031 ZMX, C 180032 HAX
425 GRAND CONCOURSE**

DOCKET DESCRIPTION

C 180031 ZMX:

IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by New York City Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) pursuant to Sections 197-c and 201 of the New York City Charter for the amendment of the Zoning Map, Section No. 6a, changing from a C4-4 District to a C6-3 District property bounded by the southerly boundary line of a playground and its easterly and westerly prolongations, Grand Concourse, East 144th Street, and Walton Avenue, Borough of The Bronx, Community District #1, as shown on a diagram (for illustrative purposes only) dated August 7, 2017.

C 180032 HAX:

IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD);

- 1) Pursuant to Article 16 of the General Municipal Law of New York State for;
 - a) The designation of property located at 425 Grand Concourse (Block 2346, Lot 1) as an Urban Development Action Area; and
 - b) Urban Development Action Area Project for such area; and
- 2) Pursuant to Section 197-c of the New York City Charter for the disposition of such property to a developer to be selected by HPD;

to facilitate construction of a mixed-use building containing residences, retail space and community facilities in the Borough of The Bronx, Community District #1.

BACKGROUND

Approval of these applications will bring about the following:

- a. Disposition of City-owned property (Block 2346, Lot 1) “the project area” to a developer selected by HPD
- b. Amending the Zoning Map to rezone the “project area” by changing an existing C4-4 to C6-3

- c. Adoption of a Zoning Text Amendment designating the Project Area as a Mandatory Inclusionary Housing Area (HIHA);
- d. The proposed Zoning Text Amendment will include:
 1. R9-1 districts in Zoning Resolution (ZR) 23-2154 (d) (2) and ZR 35-351;
 2. R9-1 districts in ZR 23-664 (c);
 3. The following criteria for R9-1 districts in Table 2 of ZR 23-664 ©
 - Maximum Base Height 125 feet
 - Maximum Building Height 285 feet
 - Maximum Number of Stories 28;
 4. Special height and setback regulations in C6-3 districts within Community District 1, Borough of The Bronx in ZR 35-661.

These actions are sought by HPD (the applicant) in order to facilitate the construction of a mixed use residential building to be known as 425 Grand Concourse. This site, located on Block 2346, Lot 1, which occupies the northwest corner the Grand Concourse at East 144th Street. The site is bounded by the west side of the Grand Concourse on the east, Walton Avenue on the west, East 144th Street on the south, and Garrison Playground on the north. To the north, the nearest street intersecting the Grand Concourse is East 149th Street. This site is currently zoned C4-4, and is located in Bronx Community District #1.

The proposed construction of 425 Grand Concourse at East 144th Street, represents only the second residential building on the Grand Concourse to be built south of Fordham Road (East 190th Street) since 1963. (702 Grand Concourse at East 153rd Street is now under construction). Rising to 27-stories, 425 Grand Concourse will also be the tallest building on the entire boulevard, surpassing the 24-story 1020 Grand Concourse completed in 1963. Additional facts associated with this project include:

- Total development cost \$160 million
- Lot size: 29,161 square feet
- Approximately 312,500 square feet will make up 425 Grand Concourse
- The total number of units: 277, including:
 - 45-studio units composed of: 412 Gross Square Feet
 - 92-one bedroom units composed of: 609 Gross Square Feet
 - 94-two bedroom units composed of: 797 Gross Square Feet
 - 46-three bedroom units composed of: 1,107 Gross Square Feet

The proposed affordability at 425 Grand Concourse includes:

The Area Median Income (AMI) for a family of 4 is:

- 30% of AMI: \$28,620
- 40% of AMI: \$38,160
- 60% of AMI: \$57,240
- 80% of AMI: \$76,320
- 100% of AMI:\$95,400

The affordable housing component for this project includes:

- 30% of AMI: 28 units (10% of total)
- 40% of AMI: 27 units (10% of total)
- 60% of AMI: 83 units (30% of total)
- 80% of AMI: 69 units (25% of total)
- 100% of AMI: 69 units (25% of total)
- Plus Superintendent's unit: Totals: 277 units

Common areas and building-amenities include:

- Passive House Design with Resiliency Components to reduce energy consumption, including naturally lit lobby areas and hallways. Specially designed solar shading devices are to be installed at key locations on the southern frontage of the building, as will be the installation of an energy recovery system
- Each unit will feature tenant-controlled climate
- Shelter in place capabilities whereby a loss of electric service would not cause a loss of lighting, heating/cooling, elevator shutdowns, or a loss of water pressure
- Virtual doorman services
- Laundry facilities on every level
- A landscaped terrace area on the 4th story consisting of 1,100 square feet
- A landscaped terrace area on the 26th story consisting of 1,000 square feet
- 2-community rooms located on the 26th story, each room measuring approximately 700 square feet
- A fitness room located on the 4th story measuring approximately 1,100 square feet

Retail, medical, educational and cultural locations are to be part of 425 Grand Concourse. Three destinations will be accessible from the Grand Concourse, going from north to south, they are:

- Cultural space offering 1,100 square feet
- Medical pediatric care facility comprised of 3,900 square feet
- Retail space with frontage on the Grand Concourse that “wraps around” corner of the Grand Concourse onto East 144th Street, comprised of 12,100 square feet

- A commercial loading dock will be located approximately 50 feet north of East 144th Street, on Walton Avenue. This dock will measure nine feet in width.

Space for a charter school will occupy 36,600 square feet. Access to this facility will be available via a Walton Avenue entrance, located on the northeast corner of 425 Grand Concourse. At this time the specifics of how this facility will be used and who will operate the charter school remains unresolved.

Garrison Playground is situated adjacent to the northern property line of 425 Grand Concourse. This property measuring approximately 0.74 acres, is under the jurisdiction of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). It is now being entirely redesigned and reconstructed by the DPR pursuant to the Community Park Initiative (CPI). The monies being provided for this park project include:

- \$4.2 million-Mayoral (CPI)
- \$ 500,000-Borough President
- \$1.5 million-City Council Member
- **\$6.2 MILLION**

As a part of this development plan, an ADA compliant pathway will be constructed by the developers of 425 Grand Concourse. This path, which will be constructed on DPR property will be accessible 24-hours. It will run parallel to the northern property line between the building-site connecting the Grand Concourse on the east to Walton Avenue on the west. A “greened boarder” consisting of trees and shrubs will be situated between the actual path to the north and 425 Grand Concourse on the south. An additional design element to be incorporated into the pathway will be the inclusion of architectural artifacts “rescued” from the demolition of Public School 31. This public school building was in fact a designated landmark elementary school that previously occupied the site on which 425 Grand Concourse is being constructed. On the northern boundary of this path a decorative fence will secure Garrison Playground after dusk. Those responsible for maintaining the pathway has yet to be determined.

Development of the surrounding community includes:

- Numerous mid-rise building belonging to Hostos Community College These buildings are located on both the Grand Concourse and on Walton Avenue
- A U-Haul and long term storage facility is located on the south side of East 144th Street with fronting on the Grand Concourse
- The landmark post office building now under reconstruction by Young-Woo Associates occupies the northeast corner of East 149th Street on the Grand Concourse
- Gateway Center consisting of approximately 1 million square feet of retail space is situated approximately four blocks west of the proposed development of 425 Grand Concourse

- Bronx Point, which will include two high rise residential buildings, a museum, commercial space and 2.6 acres of open space will be constructed five blocks west of the proposed development of 425 Grand Concourse
- Mid-rise residential buildings

Retail activity is found on East 149th Street and on the Grand Concourse. Subway access via the #2, #4 and #5-trains is available within two blocks of the development site. Bus transportation is found on the Grand Concourse and on East 149th Street. Access to the Major Deegan Expressway (Interstate 87) is found on East 149th Street. Access to Manhattan via the 145th Street Bridge is within five blocks west of the site. A mapped park to be constructed on Exterior Street at East 144th Street will be situated approximately four blocks west of 425 Grand Concourse.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND ULURP CERTIFICATION

These applications have been reviewed pursuant to CEQR and SEQRA and received a Negative Declaration. The City Planning Commission certified these applications as complete on August 7, 2017.

BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD PUBLIC HEARING

Bronx Community District #1 held a public hearing on this matter on September 28, 2017. A vote recommending approval of this application was 15 in favor, nine opposed and zero abstaining.

BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S PUBLIC HEARING

The Bronx Borough President convened a public hearing to consider this matter on October 17, 2017. Representatives of the applicant were present and spoke in favor of this application. No other members of the public present offered testimony and the hearing was closed.

BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION

It says a great deal about development in The Bronx when one considers the fact that the most recently constructed residential building to be located on the Grand Concourse south of East 167th Street opened in 1963. Now, as our borough continues its resurgence, approval of these applications will facilitate development of what will be the tallest residence on the boulevard. In many ways, I also believe it will be one of the most comprehensive and impressive buildings to be found in the entire borough.

Rising 27 stories (reduced from 28-stories) on the northwest corner of East 144th Street, 425 Grand Concourse, will stand out as a welcoming beacon to all who travel along our borough's most famous boulevard. Its architectural profile is impressive and its function is comprehensive. As such, I am pleased to see that the inclusion of a retail venue that "turns the corner" from the Grand Concourse onto East 144th Street. As this is a highly visible location, the illumination that

will result offers substantial on-street illumination. Other notable venues envisioned include a comprehensive medical clinic and a cultural center. It must also be stated that 425 Grand Concourse will place an additional burden on the demand for school seats. Consequently including 36,000 square feet for a charter school facility to be located in the proposed building, I believe is most welcomed.

“Green” design features will satisfy both Enterprise Green Communities and Passive House standards. 425 Grand Concourse will also provide for the possibility of an electric power shortage or malfunction by including infrastructure that can compensate for a power failure. This means that water services will not be interrupted and that elevators will not leave those residing on upper levels, stranded. Water saving fixtures, thermostats in each unit that can be controlled by the tenant, and solar shading devices to be included, will all serve to reduce energy consumption.

Beyond these details, for me the most important consideration are the number of units being proposed, their size and the affordability profile that is envisioned for 425 Grand Concourse. I am therefore very pleased that out of 277 units proposed, 94 units will offer 2-bedrooms, while 46 units will provide three-bedroom accommodations. I am also most pleased that the developer of this project chooses to offer unit sizes that exceed the minimum standard set by the Department of Housing Preservation Development, (HPD). While I would prefer the two-bedroom flat exceed 797 gross square feet, the three-bedroom layout offering 1,107 gross square feet of space is indeed satisfactory.

The affordability profile of 425 Grand Concourse meets my prerequisite for providing accommodations for both our community’s less fortunate (30 percent of AMI) and middle-income residents up to 100 percent of AMI. I continue to believe that while we must respond to our city’s desperate shortage of very affordable units, for a neighborhood to prosper we must also construct accommodations that will attract higher income families to our communities. As I have often noted, the fact that so many of our Bronx young professionals are not able to remain in The Bronx because they earn too much to qualify for affordable housing and too little to sign a market-rate lease; this only means these young men and women have no option to leave The Bronx, They take with them their talents and skills. 425 Grand Concourse will make a difference as we try to reconcile these two objectives.

Finally, as a graduate of Public School 31, I was truly saddened by the fact this very special elementary school building we called “The Castle on the Concourse” was in reality abandoned by the City of New York. This loss of the landmark building that was P.S. 31 will always be a tragic fact. Having said this, I was pleasantly surprised to learn that some of the architectural elements that defined P.S. 31 have been saved. As proposed, they will be included in the design of a pathway to be constructed on the northern property boundary of 425 Grand Concourse. This path connecting the Grand Concourse on the east with Walton Avenue on the west, will also define a landscaped venue between Garrison Playground on the north, with the proposed residential building approval of these applications will facilitate.

I am very pleased to recommend approval of this application.