

**BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT’S RECOMMENDATION  
ULURP APPLICATION NO: C 210156 HAX  
Melrose Open Door CB 3**

**DOCKET DESCRIPTION**

**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 881 Brook Avenue (Block 2365, Lot 21), 901 Eagle Avenue (Block 2620, Lot 46), 959 Home Street (Block 2979, Lot 1), 1298 Hoe Avenue (Block 2987, Lot 14) and 1013 Home Street (Block 2993, Lot 33) 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 five buildings containing approximately 36 affordable housing units, Borough of The Bronx, Community District #3.

**BACKGROUND**

Approval of this application will facilitate construction of five residential buildings which will together offer 30 units of owner occupied residences within two Project Areas located in Bronx Community District #3. All proposed development is “as of right,” meaning that no zoning amendments are required to accommodate the anticipated development on the identified block and lot.

These two Project Areas include:

- Project Area 1:
  - Development Site 1: 881 Brook Avenue (Block 2365, Lot 23) Zoned C4-4
  - Development Site-2: 901 Eagle Avenue (Block 2620, Lot 46) Zoned R6
- Project Area 2:
  - Development Site 3: 959 Home Street (Block 2979 Lot 1) Zoned R7-1
  - Development Site 4: 1298 Hoe Avenue (Block 2987 Lot 14) Zoned R7-1
  - Development Site 5: 1013 Home Street (Block 2993, Lot 33) Zoned R7-1

All units will be affordable co-operatives consequently perspective residents will purchase shares of stock in a corporation that will own all the residences included in this proposal.

The property on which the proposed development will be located will be owned by the Interborough Community Land Trust.

All sites are currently secured by chain-link fencing.

All future sales of cooperative shares will be affordable at the same Area Median Income (AMI) for thirty years. As such those purchasing shares will have an “investment incentive” to remain owners for thirty years.

Perspective investors are required to provide a down payment minimum of 5% of the purchase price. Amounts paid greater than the minimum of 5% will reduce monthly mortgage expenses.

All proposed buildings will be designed by the same architect and developer.

All residences will include the following amenities and/or services:

- Energy efficient heating systems
- Energy efficient windows
- Energy efficient appliances
- In-unit hook ups for washer and dryers
- Ground floor access and first floor units will be ADA compliant
- On site storage and bicycle accommodations for residents
- Roof access for passive recreation
- Heat, water and cooking gas will be paid for by the cooperative
- Electric service will be paid for the by the shareholder
- All common areas will be maintained by the cooperative

## **Selected Sites for Development**

Within Bronx Community District #3 five “development sites” are identified for the construction of the proposed cooperative residences. These include:

**Development Site 1- 881 Brook Avenue (Block 2365 Lot 23).** Zone: C4-4 (R7-2). FAR: 3.44  
Building Lot Area: 1,800 square feet. Site is vacant. Frontage: 18 feet. Depth: 100 feet  
Scope of Development:

- 4-story building (42 feet in height) composed of 5,264 gross square feet. The build will offer 4-one bedroom units

This site is located mid-block on the west side of Brook Avenue, bounded by East 161<sup>st</sup> Street to the north, East 159<sup>th</sup> Street to the south, Third Avenue to the east and Washington Avenue to the west. Residential development of the surrounding community is typified by mid-rise prewar residences and more recently constructed high-rise buildings pursuant to the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan. Commercial development is found on East 161<sup>st</sup> Street and on Third Avenue. The landmarked “old” Bronx Court House is located on the east side of Brook Avenue. Mass transit is provided by the Bx 15 and Bx 21 which operate on Third Avenue. The Bx6 and Bx6 Select Bus Service operate on East 161<sup>st</sup> Street. Metro North Commuter Railroad access is located on Park Avenue at East 162<sup>nd</sup> Street, approximately five blocks west of this site. Subway services via the “D”, “B” and #4 trains is available approximately ½ mile from the site.

**Development Site 2- 901 Eagle Avenue (Block 2620, Lot 46).** Zone: R6. FAR 2.20  
Building Lot Area: 2,500 square feet. Site is vacant. Frontage: 25 feet. Depth: 100 feet  
Scope of Development:

- 4-story building plus Mezzanine level (42 feet in height) comprised of 7,171 gross square feet. The building will offer 8-residential units including studios and one bedroom units

This site located mid-block on the west side of Eagle Avenue, bounded by East 163<sup>rd</sup> Street to the north, East 161<sup>st</sup> Street to the south, Third Avenue to the west and Trinity Avenue on the east. Residential development of the surrounding community is typified by low-rise and mid-rise prewar residences and mid-rise post-war residences. Commercial development is found on Third Avenue. Mass transit is provided by the Bx 6, Bx 6 Select Bus service operates on East 163<sup>rd</sup> Street. The Bx 15 and Bx 21 operate on Third Avenue. There is no subway or railroad access within ¾ miles of the site.

**Development Site 3- 959 Home Street (Block 2979, Lot 1).** Zone: R7-1/C2-4, FAR 4.00  
Building Lot Area: 3,108 square feet. Site is vacant. Frontage 100.6 feet. Depth 36.8 feet.  
Scope of Development:

- 4-story building plus Mezzanine level (53 feet in height) comprised of 14,176 gross square feet. The building will offer 8-residential units comprised of three and four bedroom units.

The site is located on the northeast corner of Southern Boulevard and Home Street. It is bounded by Southern to the west, Hoe Avenue to the east, Freeman Street to the north and East 169<sup>th</sup> Street to the south. Residential development on the east side of Southern Boulevard is typified by low rise, one and two family homes constructed post 1980. Residential development on the west side of Southern Boulevard is typified by mid-rise, prewar residential buildings. Commercial development is found on Southern Boulevard. Mass transit services via the Bx 19 operates on Southern Boulevard. Subway access at Freeman Street offers the #2 and #5 train service.

**Development Site 4- 1298 Hoe Avenue (Block 2987, Lot 14).** Zone: R7-1. FAR 3.44  
Building Lot Area: 2,500 square feet. Site is used for off-street parking. Frontage 25.0 feet  
Depth: 100 feet.  
Scope of Development:

- 4-story building plus Mezzanine level (53 feet in height) comprised of 8,011 gross square feet. The building will offer 8-residential units comprised of studios, one-bedroom and two-bedroom units.

This site located mid-block on the east side of Hoe Avenue bounded by Jennings Street to the north, Freeman Street to the south, Southern Boulevard to the west and Vyse Avenue to the east. Residential development of the surrounding community is comprised of low-rise one and two family homes constructed post 1980, mid-rise prewar multi-unit residences and more recently constructed mid-rise multi-unit residences. Commercial development is found on Southern Boulevard. Mass transit services via the Bx19 operates on Southern Boulevard. Subway access to Freeman Street offers the #2 and #5 train service.

**Development Site 5-1013 Home Street (Block 2993, Lot 33).** Zone: R7-1, FAR 3.44. Building Lot Area: 2,142 square feet. Site includes a one-story non-residential building. Frontage: 25 feet. Depth: 87.13. Scope of Development:

- 4-story building plus mezzanine level (42 feet in height) comprised of 7,430 gross square feet. This building will offer 4-residential units comprised of two-bedroom, three bedroom and four bedroom units.

This site is located on the north side of Home Street, approximately thirty feet east of Bryant Avenue. It is bounded by Bryant Avenue to the west, West Farms Road and Longfellow Avenue on the east, Freeman Street to the north and East 167<sup>th</sup> Street to the south. Residential development in the surrounding community is comprised of mid-rise, prewar, 5-story multiunit buildings fronting onto West Farms Road and on Longfellow Avenue. A recently constructed midrise building is located on the northwest corner of Home Street at West Farms Road. Low-rise, two family homes constructed post 1980 are found on Bryant Avenue. Adjacent to the proposed site's east boundary is a two-family wood-frame home. There is limited access to retail locations within a four block radius of the proposed development site. Mass transportation is provided by the Bx 11 operating on West Farms Road and the Bx 35 on Southern Boulevard. Subway access is available to the #2 and #5 trains at Freeman Street.

There is one additional site in Community District #3 which is not subject to ULURP. This includes:

**Development Site 11: 1175 Tinton Avenue (Block 2662, Lot 27).** Zone R6 Building Lot Area: 2,228 square feet. Site is vacant. Frontage: 16.5 feet. Depth: 135 feet. Scope of Development:

- 3-story building (32 feet in height) comprised of 3,772 gross square feet. This building will offer 2-residential units comprised of 1-one bedroom unit and 1-four bedroom unit.

This site is located mid-block on the west side of Tinton Avenue, bounded by Forest Avenue to the west, Union Avenue to the east, East 168<sup>th</sup> Street to the north and Home Street to the south. Residential development in the surrounding community includes 5-story prewar multiunit buildings, low-rise, one and two family wood frame homes as well as recently constructed two and three family homes and 6-story residences constructed post 1980. Public School #212 occupies the entire east side of Tinton Avenue, opposite the proposed building site. There is limited access to retail activity which is limited to that found on Boston Road. This site was subject to the "Third Party Transfer Program." As such, this site is not under the jurisdiction of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, (HPD) and therefore not subject to ULURP.

The following table provides a comprehensive summary of what approving this application will facilitate:

**Apartment Size Breakdown, Price Range, AMI, Down Payment Minimum**

**Studio: 5**

Square Feet: 442-554  
Price Range: \$157,000-\$197,000  
Annual Income Range: \$48,894-\$56,974  
Area Median Income (AMI): 67%-84%  
5% down payment minimum: \$7,850-\$9,850

**1-Bedroom Units: 7**

Square Feet: 566-738  
Price Range: \$201,000-\$262,000  
Annual Income Range: \$58,399-\$75,335  
AMI: 68%-88%  
5% down payment minimum: \$10,050-\$13,100

**2-Bedroom Units: 6**

Square Feet: 673-911  
Price Range: \$239,000-\$323,000  
Annual Income Range: \$69,708-\$93,066  
AMI: 68%-91%  
5% down payment minimum: \$11,950-\$16,150

**3-Bedroom Units: 9**

Square Feet: 932-1,134  
Price Range: \$331,000-\$402,000  
Annual Income Range: \$96,037-\$115,995  
AMI: 81%-91%  
5% down payment minimum: \$16,550-\$20,100

**4-Bedroom Units: 3**

Square Feet: 1,118-1,326  
Price Range: \$422,000-\$470,000  
Annual Income Range: \$122,047-\$135,646  
AMI: 93%-103%  
5% down payment minimum: \$21,100-\$23,500

Perspective buyers will participate in the Housing Connect Lottery

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND ULURP CERTIFICATION**

This application was reviewed pursuant to SEQR and CEQR and received a Negative Declaration. The City Planning Commission certified this application as complete on December 14, 2020.

## **BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD PUBLIC HEARING**

Bronx Community District #3 held a virtual public on February 9, 2021. Community Board #3 decides that: 4 recommend this application be approved, 16 recommend this application be denied. 1 abstaining.

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

A virtual public hearing was convened by the Borough President on March 6, 2021. Representatives of the applicant were present and spoke in favor of this application. No other parties sought to offer comment and the hearing was closed.

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

My administration has vigorously sought to encourage development of owner-occupied homes and support zoning ordinances that both protect existing homes and facilitate -the construction of additional owner occupied dwellings. Nonetheless, The Bronx still has the lowest concentration of such housing, both within the city as well as within the entire State of New York, and the second lowest homeownership rate of any county in the Nation.

The following points support my endorsement of this application:

- 1) This project helps to address concerns that I also highlighted in my Homeownership Report and aligns with the priorities and benefits that I promoted in my Community Land Trust Report. A community land trust is a nonprofit, community-based organization designed to ensure community stewardship of land. CLT's can be an invaluable tool to help support and establish healthy and sustainable community growth in The Bronx.
- 2) Those making a financial commitment to their home also make a commitment to their community;
- 3) As history will verify, an investment made today will yield financial security for the future;
- 4) All future sales of these cooperative units must retain their AMI rankings for thirty years.
- 5) For young families not looking to leave the community in which they grew up, but who also want to own rather than rent, Melrose Open Door offers this option;

- 6) All lots are situated mid-block and given their size, are considered “infill sites.” The only exception to this is Development Site #3. Further, all sites are currently vacant properties with the exception of an existing residential building on Development Site #4, which allows for minimal turnover and in fact helps provide a use to land that is currently underutilized.
- 7) By reducing the cost to 5% of the total sales price, owning property in Melrose can now be considered affordable. This benefit rectifies an insurmountable challenge for many perspective buyers who otherwise may not have enough liquid money for a down payment. Indeed, this is often a “deal breaker” for young and growing families when trying to purchase a home in the broader co-op market or when seeking to buy a home. This option does dramatically improve the affordability co-op ownership as provided through Open Door.

To fully actualize the advantages that this project can yield, I implore HPD to ensure that these units are marketed locally first and foremost. The benefits of providing more homeownership opportunities for The Bronx can only be realized if they are indeed afforded to Bronxites. Connecting these opportunities to Bronxites remains imperative to the intrinsic motivation of approving this application.

I would also be remiss if I did not acknowledge the recommendation made by Bronx Community Board #3 to deny approval of this application. I appreciate their opposition, most notably, to the question of affordability of the Open Door program for those who now reside in Community District #3. To this concern I point out that those seeking to purchase their home pursuant to Open Door must satisfy specific AMI requirements, and as heretofore noted the AMI ceilings remain in place for thirty years. So too, many cooperatives require a minimum of 20% down. In some cases even in The Bronx, a perspective buyer may be required to provide one year’s maintenance fees in an escrow account before being considered as a shareholder. This is most certainly not so here. I also believe that the demographic often overlooked are the young families whose income often exceeds the maximum AMI set by other HPD projects, but yet too modest to qualify in the broader rental or ownership market. As such, our Bronx communities lose these folks to places beyond the city, taking with them their talents and aspirations. For these families Open Door does indeed open a door and this is to the benefit of Community District #3 and our borough.

I recommend approval of this application.