

SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITINGS, AND DISPOSITIONS
CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS,
PUBLIC SITINGS, AND DISPOSITIONS

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Wednesday, February 5, 2025
Start: 11:14 AM
Recess: 12:01 PM

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Room,
16th Floor

B E F O R E: Hon. Majority Leader Amanda
Fariás, Acting-Chair
Hon. Kamillah M. Hanks, Chair

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Justin Brannan
Amanda C. Fariás
Oswald Feliz
Christopher Marte
Sandy Nurse
Yusef Salaam

SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITINGS, AND DISPOSITIONS

A P P E A R A N C E S

James Tschikov,
Senior Manhattan Borough Planner New York City
Department of Housing Preservation and
Development (HPD)

Brian Backschider,
Senior Development Project Manager at The
Community Builders, Inc

Grayson Jordan,
Partner at Paul Gastrucci Architects PCA

Melissa Auton,
Director of Manhattan Planning at NYC Department
of Housing Preservation & Development (HPD)

Joy Resor,
Deputy Director of Manhattan Planning at NYC
Department of Housing Preservation & Development
(HPD)

Thomas Campbell,
Principal of Thorobird Companies

Annabelle Meunier,
Senior Planner at New York City Department of
Housing (HPD)

Herb Regnier,
Executive Director of Bangladeshi American
Community Development and Youth Services

Zlata Kobzantsev,
Deputy Director of ELLA Program
New York City Department of Housing Preservation
and Development (HPD)

SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITINGS, AND DISPOSITIONS
A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Justin Donlon,
Intergovernmental Office at New York City
Department of Housing Preservation and
Development (HPD)

Sandy Rozario,
Director of Development Thorobird Companies

Paúl Duston-Muñoz,
THINK Architecture & Design PLLC

2 SERGEANT POLITE: Testing one, two, one, two is
3 today's date is February 5, 2025. Today's hearing is
4 for the Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Sitings,
5 and Dispositions - being recorded in the 16th Floor
6 Committee Room by Keith Polite.

7 (PAUSE)

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Will the Zoom host please
9 start the webinar?

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning, and welcome to
11 the New York City Council hearing of the Subcommittee
12 on Landmarks, Public Sitings, and Dispositions.

13 To minimize disruptions, please place all
14 electronic devices to vibrate or silent mode.

15 If you wish to testify, please go to the back of
16 the room to fill out a testimony slip with the
17 Sergeant at Arms.

18 At this time and going forward, no one is to
19 approach the dais, I repeat, no one is to approach
20 the dais.

21 Chair, we are ready to begin.

22 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: (Gaveling in) Good
23 morning, welcome to a meeting of the Subcommittee On
24 Landmarks, Public Sightings, and Dispositions. I'm
25

2 Majority Leader Amanda Farías, and I'm the Acting-
3 Chair of The Subcommittee.

4 I'm joined today by my colleagues, Council
5 Members, Brannan and Marte.

6 Before we begin with today's Agenda, I will
7 remind everyone that this meeting is being held in a
8 hybrid format. For members of the public who wish to
9 testify remotely, we ask that you first register
10 online, and you may do so now by visiting
11 council.nyc.gov/landuse to sign up, and then sign on
12 to the Zoom and remain signed in until you have
13 testified.

14 For anyone with us today in person and wishing to
15 testify, if you have not done so already, please see
16 one of our sergeants to fill out a speaker's card,
17 and we will call your name at the appropriate time.

18 For anyone wishing to submit written testimony on
19 the items being heard today, we ask that you please
20 send it via email to landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov
21 including the LU number and or project name in the
22 subject line of your email. Video and audio testimony
23 will not be accepted.

24 I remind members of the public that this is a
25 formal government proceeding and that decorum shall

2 be observed at all times. As such, members of the
3 public shall remain until called to testify.

4 The witness table is reserved for people who wish
5 to testify. No video recording or photography is
6 allowed from the witness table. Further, members of
7 the public may not present audio or video recordings
8 as testimony, but may submit transcripts of such
9 recordings to the Sergeant for inclusion in the
10 hearing record.

11 On today's Agenda, we have hearings on the
12 Beacon, LU 225, 226, 227, 228, an application by HPD
13 for a project in Council Member-Deputy Speaker
14 Ayala's district in District 8; 581 Grant Avenue
15 Development, a Preconsidered Land Use item, an
16 application by HPD for project in Council Member
17 Nurse's district in Brooklyn; as well as a vote.

18 I now open a public hearing for Land Use 225
19 through 228, The Beacon, an application submitted by
20 the New York City Department of Housing Preservation
21 and Development, or HPD, for a UDAAP and disposition
22 of real property, a Zoning Map, and City Map change
23 for property located in East Harlem in Council Member
24 Ayala's district.

2 Appearing today on this proposal is James
3 Tschikov, Senior Manhattan Borough Planner at HPD,
4 senior Manhattan borough planner at HPD; Brian
5 Backschider, Senior Development Project Manager at
6 the Community Builders, Inc; Grayson Jordan, partner
7 at Paul Gastrucci Architects PCA.

8 Those wishing to testify remotely may register
9 online by visiting the Council's website at
10 www.council.nyc/landuse.

11 Counsel, would you please administer the
12 affirmation?

13 (PAUSE)

14 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Can you folks join me,
15 the folks that I called, please join us at the
16 testimony table.

17 (PAUSE)

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Panelists, would you please
19 raise your right hand and state your names for the
20 record.

21 JAMES TSCHIKOV: James Tschikov.

22 GRAYSON JORDAN: Grayson Jordan.

23 BRIAN BACKSCHIDER: Brian Backschider.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do you affirm to tell the
25 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in

2 your testimony before this subcommittee, and in
3 answer to council member questions?

4 JAMES TSCHIKOV: I do.

5 GRAYSON JORDAN: I do.

6 BRIAN BACKSCHIDER: I do.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

8 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Thank you, applicant
9 panelists.

10 For the viewing public, if you need an accessible
11 version, please send an email request to
12 landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov.

13 And now the applicant team may begin.

14 JAMES TSCHIKOV: Okay, good morning, Subcommittee
15 members, Council Members, thank you for having us
16 here today. Good morning, subcommittee members,
17 council members. Thank you for having us here today.
18 My name is James Tschikov, and I'm the Senior Planner
19 in HPD's Division of Planning and Predevelopment
20 joined by my Director, Melissa Auton, and Deputy
21 Director Joy Resor available for Q & A today, uh, as
22 well as representatives from the Development team,
23 who will introduce themselves during the
24 presentation.

1 So we're excited to be here for this milestone in
2 ULURP (Uniform Land Use Review Procedure) to present
3 the Beacon Project designated by HPD's East Harlem
4 RFP site A. Next slide, please.

6 So the proposed project will be located at 413
7 East 120th Street at the site of the East Harlem
8 Multi-Service Center.

9 The development site is adjacent to the NYCHA
10 Wagner houses and affordable housing development,
11 Acacia Gardens, between First Avenue and Pleasant
12 Avenue in East Harlem's Community District 11.

13 HPD is the applicant for this ULURP, which was
14 certified on September 9, 2024, and the Development
15 team working with us comprises Ascendant Neighborhood
16 Development and the Community Builders.

17 The proposed project includes one 21-story
18 residential building with building with approximately
19 281 affordable housing units, plus one
20 superintendent's unit to be developed under HPD's
21 extremely low and low income affordability program
22 known as ELLA.

23 The second building will be a rehabilitated and
24 expanded multi-service center, which will be owned
25

1 and managed by the Development team. Next slide,
2 please.
3

4 And so to facilitate this project, HPD has
5 proposed several land use actions, which are as
6 follows:

7 A change in the City Map to demap 20 feet of the
8 northern portion of East 120th Street from 1st Avenue
9 to the eastern end of the development site. A UDAAP
10 designation of the disposition area, UDAAP approval
11 of the proposed project, and subsequent disposition
12 of City owned property on Lot 8, as well as the area
13 proposed to be demapped.

14 Additionally, HPD proposes to rezone the area
15 highlighted in dotted red from the split R7-2/R7X
16 Districts to an R8 District and a Zoning Text
17 Amendment to map an MIH area.

18 And so now I'll pass it off to Brian from the
19 Community Builders to speak more detail about the
20 project.

21 BRIAN BACKSCHIDER: Great, we can go to the next
22 slide.

23 And thank you again, Council, for your time
24 today. So as James mentioned, I'm Brian Backschider,
25 Senior Development Project Manager for the Community

1 Builders. We are codevelopers of the Beacon, along
2 with Ascendant Neighborhood Development.
3

4 So as James mentioned, the Beacon will create a
5 21-story, 100% affordable residential building,
6 including new indoor and outdoor amenity spaces, and
7 also, will rehabilitate and expand the existing East
8 Harlem Multi-Service Center to better serve the East
9 Harlem community with upgraded office space and
10 program spaces. You can go to next slide.

11 On the site plan here, you can see that these are
12 two distinct buildings with separate entrances from
13 East 120th Street, both entrances have been elevated
14 above the floodplain. The residential building is on
15 the west side of the site, and the building then
16 wraps behind the existing Multi-Service Center
17 building.

18 The Multi-Service Center, will be have a new
19 entrance, it's actually the historic entrance to the
20 school building, and then we'll have a secondary,
21 egress out to the east side of the site.

22 This is also a good place to see the amenities,
23 uh, outdoor amenity spaces. There's an interior
24 courtyard and a 17-story terrace that's for the
25 residential tenants.

2 And there's also a north yard, that we have
3 designed to not be enclosed, so that it's not a
4 barrier to the surrounding Wagner Houses, and also
5 creating a new pedestrian path called the Wagner Way,
6 that you can see on the east side of the site that
7 connects into the public area of the Wagner campus.
8 And they actually, uh, on the Wagner Campus, there's
9 a space they call the Green Space that's a great
10 public stage and event space that this is now
11 connecting into. We can go to the next slide.

12 So on the screen now, you can see, the proposed,
13 affordability mix. We have, studios, ones, twos, and
14 three bedroom units, ranging from 30% to 80% AMI.

15 And we're really proud of the fact working with,
16 from the Community Board and Deputy Speaker Ayala, we
17 were able to, in our design team, we're able to
18 maximize the amount of family size units here, which
19 is a request from the community.

20 So 51 two-bedrooms and 50... or 51 two-bedrooms
21 and 52 three-bedroom units.

22 And mentioned 15% of the units will be set aside
23 for formerly homeless households. Okay. Next slide.

24 Then jumping over to the Multi-Service Center
25 Building, the building would be rehabilitated to

1 better serve the existing seven tenants in the
2 building that are all nonprofit community
3 organizations, and will also create new spaces for,
4 new programming and expanded programming as well as
5 spaces that are available for short term, community
6 use, including two new, uhm, two new conference rooms
7 and a new sixth floor space, which we'll... I'll talk
8 about shortly.

9
10 To note, these spaces are being designed along
11 with those seven current tenants. They've been
12 collaborating through the entire process. We are
13 making sure that the new spaces are gonna meet their
14 needs, but, and also, they have agreed that they are
15 gonna relocate off-site to facilitate the
16 construction. We've worked really closely to
17 understand their needs for the relocation space, and
18 have identified multiple locations in East Harlem,
19 that are viable relocation spaces.

20 So as we get closer to the construction start
21 date, we would secure one of those spaces for their
22 use during the construction. You can go to the next
23 slide.

24 And here's a view of some renderings of what's
25 going on this new sixth floor. So we're adding an

1 addition that will include a new basketball court
2 that is, uh, it could be a multiuse space, it's also
3 gonna be able to be used for events, for larger
4 events for community groups, as well as two new
5 educational greenhouses.
6

7 And this... both the basketball court and the
8 greenhouses, uh, the design came through a
9 collaboration with PS 206 that's located further down
10 East 120th Street. This is programming that they're
11 not able to offer on-site, but they've expressed
12 interest in. And so they've been the lead in
13 collaborating on the design and will be a primary
14 user of the spaces, but these spaces are also gonna
15 be available to others in... other community
16 organizations to use for their programming as well.

17 All right, we can go ahead to the next slide, uh,
18 and with that, I can hand it over to Grayson to talk
19 about sustainability and resiliency.

20 GRAYSON JORDON: Great, again, Grayson Jordan,
21 Principal of Paul Gastrucci Architects, thanks again
22 for having us here today. We are very pleased to
23 present the sustainability and resiliency features of
24 the Beacon, which is a deeply sustainable new
25 construction adaptive reuse project.

2 The project sustainability includes significant
3 energy and carbon footprint savings, but also extends
4 beyond this definition to include resilient design
5 with another focus on occupant health, wellness, and
6 comfort. This is a NYSERDA Buildings of Excellence
7 Award winner. The project has been recognized as an
8 exemplary demonstration of passive house design and
9 full building electrification, which is a critical
10 aspect of the City's long term commitment to a carbon
11 neutral future.

12 Further to this point, the project team has
13 created and made public available research, modeling,
14 and analysis on insulation, efficient mechanical
15 systems, renewable energy systems, and building
16 controls that will allow us to affordably operate
17 fully electric buildings throughout the city.

18 To address resiliency, the project located all
19 new floors and entries above the floodplain and
20 provides flood proofing for the existing cellar space
21 of the adaptive reuse building. Additionally, all
22 utilities are located above grade and the level of
23 design flood elevation.

24

25

2 Other resilience features include passive
3 survivability, emergency generators, and rooftop
4 solar PV arrays.

5 Finally, for the interiors of the project,
6 careful selection of healthy materials, commitment to
7 ample natural light and ventilation, and best
8 practice fresh air ventilation create spaces that are
9 healthy and comfortable to habitate.

10 I think that's it. I'll open up to questions.

11 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Thank you, folks, for the
12 presentation, we have also been joined by Council
13 Member Nurse and Council Member Feliz.

14 And I have a couple of questions, the renderings
15 of the new Wagner Way show a well-lit and attractive
16 landscape. Has there been coordination with NYCHA to
17 expand this level of beautification to the existing
18 Wagner House's corridors?

19 BRIAN BACKSCHIDER: Yes. So we've been engaged
20 with the Wagner campus actually really in two
21 different levels. One, with the Tenant Association,
22 and gathering feedback for what their, you know,
23 their... how they use the spaces around the Beacon
24 site and what they'd like to see kind of along our
25 edge.

2 And then also, sort of from the more management
3 level at Wagner Campus to make sure that we're
4 coordinating any sort of construction activities,
5 that are happening on-site.

6 And so to that end, we've started those
7 discussions and are continuing them to incorporate
8 the feedback in the design.

9 We also might use a portion of the site that's
10 sort of underutilized for construction staging. And
11 then as part of the restoration at the after
12 construction, we would be doing improvements to that
13 space.

14 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Okay, the development
15 team been working with current tenants of the
16 community space to ensure that they do have priority
17 in moving back into the building once it's
18 constructed? And if so, what's the plan tenants for
19 these tenants during this time period?

20 BRIAN BACKSCHIDER: Sure, yeah, so we've worked
21 very closely with all of the existing tenants in the
22 building. The spaces, the design of the finished
23 spaces has been done in concert with them so that the
24 designs are to meet their programming. They're not,
25 just vanilla boxes. They are designed for their use.

2 And as I mentioned, during relocation... or
3 during construction, they'll be relocated off-site.
4 We've worked very closely with them to understand
5 what those needs are, both their, you know, the space
6 needs, also their timing needs, you know, when's a
7 good time to move, when's not a good time to move,
8 where, you know, their clients are coming from, like,
9 so locating it within the neighborhood, block to
10 block, what's a good block in East Harlem to move to,
11 what's not a such a good block to move to for the
12 clients? And so we've worked very closely, to make
13 sure that that's as smooth as it can be.

14 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Okay, and can you please
15 describe how the East Harlem Rezoning planning
16 process informed this project specific process?

17 And how does this project echo values and
18 priorities put forward in the past planning efforts?

19 JAMES TSCHIKOV: Yeah, absolutely.

20 So the East Harlem neighborhood plan, I believe
21 was released in 2019 or 2018, and this RFP was
22 released in the summer of 2019 when, in the East
23 Harlem neighborhood plan, we identified one of the
24 community priorities to be developing affordable
25 housing on public sites with also improved community

1 amenities. And so the RFP, for East Harlem was both
2 this site, site A and site B, which is the NYPD
3 parking lot on Park Avenue. And both of those are
4 coming with community improved amenities, as well as,
5 you know, deeply affordable housing that is a 100%
6 affordable on City owned sites.
7

8 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Families in this district
9 often are left frustrated with unit size and unit mix
10 available in in HPD led projects and cite the lack of
11 family sized units as a main reason for displacement.

12 I know you folks are saying you've worked with
13 expanding those with the community boards and hearing
14 from some of the tenants. But are there any specifics
15 you'd like to highlight on how HPD has worked
16 specifically in this project design around that?

17 BRIAN BACKSCHIDER: Sure. I don't have the slide
18 up in front of me, but I think, you know, the
19 original the original RFP response, you know, was to
20 meet the ELLA term sheet, which I think requires 20%,
21 I think, family sized units? And, we were able to, I
22 think we're at 27% of the family size units.

23 So, you know, that was... that was something that
24 took a lot of effort with the design team of pushing
25

2 and pulling to make sure that it fit, but, we were,
3 you know, happy that we were able to achieve that.

4 MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Uh...

5 JAMES TSCHIKOV: Uh, just...

6 MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Sorry, no, go ahead?

7 JAMES TSCHIKOV: Oh, just to add in there, yes, so
8 the ELLA term sheet is a 30% minimum for family sized
9 units. And even at the start, this project, I
10 believe, had about just already over that threshold
11 for family sized units, but it's been a collaborative
12 effort between the developer, HPD, the Council
13 Member, uh, the Deputy Speaker Ayala, and the
14 Community Board. And throughout the process, we've
15 been trying our best to incorporate those changes
16 while balancing the project's financial feasibility.

17 BRIAN BACKSCHIDER: Yeah, so just, it's 37% of
18 our, yeah...

19 MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Thank you for
20 correcting. I was going to say there's a disparity
21 of 10% there, but...

22 What type of relationship is being envisioned
23 between the site, its residents, and that of the
24 existing Wagner houses?

2 BRIAN BACKSCHIDER: Yeah, so as I mentioned, you
3 know, we there's steps we've taken in the design to
4 make sure that the design was inclusive of Wagner
5 Houses. The Wagner Way was part of that, creating the
6 North yard that isn't fenced in, is another part of
7 that to make sure that the, I mean, the spaces are
8 physically, you know, accessible, but it's also, you
9 know, visually, you know, that they're not barriers.

10 And then we've taken that into, as I mentioned,
11 our communication with the Wagner residents and
12 leadership there, uh, to ensure that they have, uh,
13 they know what's coming, and that they're aware of
14 opportunities, you know, both during construction and
15 going forward.

16 But, also, you know, we've already... there's
17 already been discussions, but some of them are
18 interested in, programming, using some of the
19 programmable space in the Multi-Service Center.

20 And we expect that to continue to grow as a
21 collaboration as we're able to bring the spaces
22 online.

23 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Thank you.

24 And my last question before I see if colleagues
25 have any, can you folks talk about the affordability

2 levels and how AMIs have gone up faster than incomes
3 in this neighborhood? And what, if any, changes to
4 the affordability mix might be appropriate to make
5 these units truly affordable to neighborhood
6 households?

7 (PAUSE)

8 MELISSA AUTON: Hi, Melissa Auton...

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: All right, before you testify,
10 could you just state your name for the record?

11 MELISSA AUTON: Melissa Auton.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do you affirm to tell the
13 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in
14 your testimony before this subcommittee, and in
15 answer to council member questions?

16 MELISSA AUTON: I do.

17 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Thank you.

18 MELISSA AUTON: Hi, Melissa Auton, Director of
19 Manhattan Planning.

20 So if you could pull up the affordability slide,
21 that might be a little helpful here.

22 But, yeah, so we understand the gentrification
23 pressures here in this neighborhood. We hear it a
24 lot. We have done a lot of work providing affordable
25 housing in this neighborhood. I think it's the top

1 producer of affordable housing. So we have a lot of
2 projects that are going on here. We always aim to do
3 the most affordable that we can. We do a lot of ELLA
4 projects in this neighborhood. Specifically with this
5 one, you know, we have been trying to maximize the
6 number of very low and extremely low income units
7 here.

9 And, actually, at the beginning of the process,
10 we had, less 30 and 50% of overall, and now we
11 actually have added a couple. So we're at over 50%,
12 30% and 50% AMI units. And one of the big focuses
13 actually here and what we were hearing was that the
14 number of family sized units that fell within that
15 should be maximized. So we've really tried to...
16 and, you know, the Development team understood this
17 and really worked to maximize the number of family
18 sized units that fall within those categories.

19 Also, by maximizing the number of family sized
20 units overall in the project, that means that there
21 would be more family sized units falling within the
22 formerly homeless 15% set aside.

23 I don't know if that answers your question, but
24 that's some of the considerations we've taken here,

1 especially with affordability and helping folks to
2 stay in place within the neighborhood.

3
4 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Yeah, I appreciate that
5 response. And I think coupled with the work that
6 you're doing with communicating to the Community
7 Board and tenants and organizations and the Deputy
8 Speaker, that kinda helps give us a better shape of
9 why and what you folks are aiming for towards doing
10 together.

11 So thank you, I appreciate that response.

12 I'd like to now recognize any of my colleagues to
13 see if anyone has any questions or remarks.

14 Seeing none. Thank you, the applicant panel is
15 now excused.

16 Counsel, are there any members of the public who
17 wish to testify on this item?

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I don't believe any of the
19 sheets I received were for this matter. I don't have
20 anyone signed up.

21 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Is there anyone in the
22 public that's here with us who would like to testify
23 on the Beacon?

24 Okay, seeing none, there being no other members
25 of the public or no members of the public who wish

1 testify regarding the LU 225 through 228 for the
2 Beacon, the public hearing is now closed and the
3 items are laid over.
4

5 We will now hold a vote to approve the LU 207,
6 the Landmark Designation of the Jacob Day Residence
7 in Council Member Rivera's district in Manhattan.

8 I would like to recognize Council Member Marte,
9 Council Member Brannan, Council Member Nurse, and
10 Council Member Feliz. Members of the Subcommittee who
11 have any questions or remarks about today's items,
12 please let me know now.

13 Okay, seeing none, Counsel, please call the roll.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Brannan?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Aye

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Feliz?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Aye on all.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Farías, I
19 mean...

20 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: I vote aye.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Marte?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: I vote aye.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Nurse?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: (UN-MIC'D) I vote aye.
25

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: With a vote of 5 in the
3 affirmative, 0 in the negative, and 0 abstentions the
4 items are adopted and referred to the full Land Use
5 Committee.

6 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Thank you, colleagues,
7 for your votes.

8 I will now open a public hearing for related
9 Preconsidered LU items for the 81 Grant Avenue
10 Development submitted by HPD for a Zoning Map
11 Amendment, a Zoning Text Amendment, and a designation
12 of an Urban Development Action Area and an Urban
13 Development Action Area Project, and disposition of
14 City owned property to facilitate the development of
15 a new seven-story mixed-use building in the East New
16 York neighborhood in Brooklyn, located in Council
17 Member Nurse's district.

18 Appearing today on this panel is Thomas Campbell,
19 Principal of Thorobird Companies; and Herb Regnier,
20 Executive Director of Bangladeshi American Community
21 Development and Youth Services. And I as called your
22 name, thank you all for joining the testimony dais.

23 Those wishing to testify remotely must register
24 online by visiting Council's website
25 council.nyc.gov/landuse.

2 Counsel, would you please administer the
3 affirmation?

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Panelists, would you please
5 raise hands and state your name for the record?

6 HERB REGNIER: Herb Regnier

7 THOMAS CAMPBELL: Good morning, Thomas Campbell.

8 ANNABELLE MEUNIER: (UN-MIC'D) Annabelle Meunier.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Make sure your mic is on.

10 ANNABELLE MEUNIER: Annabelle Meunier.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do you affirm to tell the
12 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in
13 your testimony before this subcommittee, and in
14 answer to council member questions?

15 (PANEL AFFIRMS)

16 MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Thank you, applicant
17 panelists, please begin.

18 For the viewing public, if you need an accessible
19 version of this presentation please send an email to
20 request to landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov.

21 And now the applicant team may begin.

22 ANNABELLE MEUNIER: Thank you, and good morning,
23 Council Member Nurse, and members of the City Council
24 Committee on Landmark's, Public Sightings, and
25 Dispositions.

2 We are happy to present this proposal for 581
3 Grant Avenue Development today. My name is Annabelle
4 Meunier, I'm a Senior Planner with HPD's Office of
5 Neighborhood Strategies. I'm joined by my colleagues,
6 Zlata Kobzantsev, who is the Deputy Director of ELLA
7 Program at HPD, and, Justin Donlon of our
8 Intergovernmental Office who will help us, answer
9 questions today, as well as members of the
10 Development Team, including Thomas Campbell of
11 Thorobird Companies, the developer, Sandy Rozario of
12 Thorobird, Herb Regnier, who is the Executive
13 Director of the Bangladeshi American Community
14 Development and Youth Services or BACDYS Community
15 Partner, and Paúl Duston-Muñoz of THINK Architects,
16 and I'll be presenting along with Thomas and Herb
17 this morning. Next slide, please.

18 This is an application by the New York City
19 Department of Housing Preservation and Development
20 and certified into ULURP on August 19, 2024.

21 Although not part of the Rezoning area, this site
22 was identified as a potential affordable housing site
23 through the East New York Neighborhood Planning
24 Process and was designated to the Development team in
25 2019 through a competitive RFP process.

2 Proposed our series of land use actions, to
3 facilitate the development of a new seven-story
4 building with approximately a 173 affordable rental
5 apartments, one additional unit for the
6 superintendent, and approximately 8,775 square feet
7 of ground floor community facility space.

8 And the requested Land Use actions include, one,
9 an Urban Development Action Area designation and
10 project approval and disposition of City owned land,
11 two, a Zoning Map Amendment to rezone the site from
12 an existing R5 District to an R6 District, and three,
13 a Zoning Text Amendment to establish the rezoning
14 area as Mandatory Inclusionary Housing or MIH area.

15 Next slide, please.

16 The development site shown here in red is located
17 at the corner of Grant Avenue and Pitkin Avenue. This
18 site is directly next to the Grant Avenue Subway
19 Station subway serviced by the A train as well as the
20 Q7 and Q8 bus lines. The site is currently used as a
21 municipal parking lot with roughly a 48 parking
22 spaces.

23 Across the street from the development site in
24 blue is another DOT municipal parking lot that will
25

1 be temporarily used by the Development team for
2 staging during construction.

3
4 And separately, HPD in partnership, with various
5 sister agencies, is leading a community engagement
6 process just south of the development site, which is
7 the Jewel Streets' Neighborhood Plan, and it's an
8 area wide planning process that would connect
9 infrastructure needs with long term resilient
10 neighborhood design, especially along Conduit Avenue,
11 for street infrastructure and pedestrian safety. Next
12 slide, please.

13 HPD has been closely coordinating with MTA on the
14 future accessibility improvements since the RFP
15 process. MTA has indicated that it will require an
16 approximately 430 square foot rectangular portion of
17 the development site adjacent to, Block 4223 Lot 6,
18 for accessibility improvements, as well as an
19 approximately 20-foot deep temporary nonexclusive
20 construction easement and a 10-foot deep permanent
21 nonexclusive easement for ongoing maintenance as
22 shown on this slide.

23 This will be achieved by either subdividing the
24 development site and indenturing the 430 square foot
25 parcel to the master lease between the City and MTA

2 or by providing a transit easement volume pursuant
3 to, ZR66-21.

4 A chairperson certification may be required as a
5 future followup action and is not part of this
6 application.

7 And additionally, 2,850 square feet of
8 landscaping is proposed on MTA's adjacent property to
9 complement the development site open space.

10 So I'll now pass it, next slide please, to,
11 Thomas who will present the project specifics.

12 THOMAS CAMPBELL: Yes, thank you, Annabelle, and
13 thank you to the Council for hearing us this morning,
14 I really appreciate your time, Councilman Nurse,
15 thanks, great to be here with you again. Really
16 excited to get to this point. You've noticed we were
17 awarded in 2019 it took us a while to get here, so
18 very excited to be here this monumental time, uh,
19 great to be with our partner at HPD.

20 As Annabelle mentioned, our partners, Bangladeshi
21 American Youth and Development Services, our zoning
22 attorneys, Akerman, and, of course, our architect,
23 THINK Architects, who really put thoughtful design,
24 you can tell our buildings, their buildings, and
25 fortunately don't look like affordable housing. They

2 serve and feel like they can serve anywhere in New
3 York City. Very, excited to, deliver a specifically
4 targeted project for this city line community. Very
5 excited about it, and excited to tell you about it;
6 173 units, as Annabelle mentioned, of mixed-use,
7 mixed-income housing. Within that mix, there's
8 actually a pilot mix of a litter of four-bedroom
9 apartments. We're excited to be the first affordable
10 housing project to ever offer four-bedroom
11 apartments. I know there was a comment earlier about
12 family units. This is the first. We're excited about
13 that, and it's a pilot, so hopefully it goes well,
14 then we could challenge ourselves to do more of it.

15 Also, as Annabelle mentioned, 8,700 square feet
16 of outward facing community facility space, half of
17 which will be tenanted by a Brooklyn Health and
18 Wellness Centers, which is a federally, qualified
19 health care, organization, FEQC, I always get that,
20 acronym wrong. My apologies. And then (INAUDIBLE),
21 this is gonna tenant to the other half of that space.

22 In terms of open space, 37,000 square feet of
23 outdoor space. Really excited about that. That's a
24 large amount of space for this size of units; 8,100
25 square feet will be private on the ground floor for

1 the tenants' use; 8,600 square feet will be for
2 public use. We have a public breezeway that goes
3 through our project to create a flow through
4 underneath our project directly to the Grand Avenue
5 Train Station. So we're excited about that. In
6 addition, there's an arcade at the corner of Grant
7 Avenue in Pitkin for public use.

9 This site was very important to the community
10 until the place of assembly and gathering. We're
11 trying to give a piece of that back to the community.

12 And then on the rooftops, really iconic 20,000
13 square foot of rooftop space. All of our projects
14 have rooftop spaces for the people. That's what we
15 believe in. But here, we have an opportunity because
16 of this large L-shaped lot to do a massive amount of
17 rooftop space. THINK has done a great job with
18 design, and we're excited about that. Next slide,
19 please.

20 And in terms of sustainable design, certain
21 upgrade to the current asphalt condition. We are
22 incorporating certain specific... we're following
23 Enterprise Growing Communities, EGC, and there are
24 certain sustainable measures including solar panels
25 and a certain focus on stormwater retention, again,

2 which is gonna be a certain upgrade from the current
3 asphalt condition. We're gonna have a much better way
4 to deal with the rain and the weather conditions.

5 This time, we're gonna pass it on to our partners
6 at BACDYS to talk a bit about our social service
7 mission.

8 HERB REGNIER: Next slide, please.

9 Good morning, Committee members, great to be with
10 you this morning.

11 I'm Herb Regnier, Executive Director of BACDYS
12 and this, development project is critical to our
13 organization's ability to expand our services in the
14 areas of workforce development, afterschool care for
15 local residents, and additional benefits entitlement.
16 It'll be available to residents at large. Also
17 partnering with us is, the BMS, which Thomas just
18 mentioned, and they'll be operating a federally
19 qualified health center at which it'll ensure that
20 health is available to community residents regardless
21 as their ability to pay or not.

22 And then I'll turn it back over to Annabelle.

23 ANNABELLE MEUNIER: Thank you, Herb and Thomas.

24 The proposed - next slide, please. Sorry.

2 The proposed project will be developed under
3 HPD's Extremely Low and Low Income Affordability
4 Program or ELLA with a mix of studio to four-bedroom
5 units, uh, 56% of the units will be affordable to
6 individuals and families earning up to 60% of AMI or
7 83,880 for a family of three. Additionally, 28% of
8 the units will be family sized, as Thomas mentioned,
9 which includes two, three, and four bedroom
10 apartments.

11 I just wanna also say that the community
12 expressed the need for four-bedroom units, and we
13 wanted to be responsive, so, we were very excited
14 about that. And in addition, 30% of the units will be
15 set aside for formally homeless individuals referred
16 to by DHS. Next slide, please.

17 To summarize, this project includes, again, 173
18 affordable rental units developed under ELLA, and as
19 well as the ground floor community facility space
20 operated by BACDYS and BMS, and the outdoor space.

21 And we just wanna thank you again for this
22 opportunity to present the project, and we can open
23 it up to any questions you might have.
24
25

2 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Thank you very much, I
3 would like to recognize Council Member Nurse for
4 questions.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Thank you, Chair.

6 Good afternoon, yes? No, not afternoon yet, uh,
7 eight more minutes. Good morning, thank you all for
8 your work on this project. I know the community is
9 excited to see this come to fruition, and I think
10 it's a great project.

11 I had two questions, uh, one, if you could put on
12 the record, the engagement with Community Board 5 and
13 any adjustments that you made based on their
14 recommendations or resolutions. And then two, I know
15 that this was a modular - originally, when I got this
16 original version of it, it was a modular
17 construction, and now it's gone to conventional. Can
18 you talk a little bit about why that change was made?

19 ANNABELLE MEUNIER: Okay, we have... We'll have
20 Justin...

21 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: As you come to the dais,
22 please make sure to state your name.

23 JUSTIN DONLON: Hi, Justin Donlon, HPD.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And do you affirm to tell the
25 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, in

2 your testimony before this subcommittee, and in
3 answer to all council member questions?

4 JUSTIN DONLON: I do.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

6 JUSTIN DONLON: Yes, so I think the best way to
7 answer that is to kinda go back to the beginning of
8 what the purpose of the RFP was.

9 So when the City put out the modular development
10 RFP in 2018, the goal was utilizing what was at the
11 time a very new construction method that could reduce
12 costs and development timeline to bring things online
13 faster in terms of affordable housing development.
14 That was, like, the whole purpose. So, of course,
15 things change as development goes on in time. So as
16 we were continuing to refine the project and the
17 financing, the project financing, we came to learn
18 that the conventional construction route in this case
19 would actually allow us to reduce costs, and we
20 weren't really benefiting from potential time savings
21 by opting for modular in this case.

22 So that's why we felt comfortable with pivoting
23 to conventional construction, knowing that we can
24 still deliver the project as we were presented
25

2 through pre ULURP and the ULURP process more quickly
3 as opposed to remaining with the modular development.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Yeah. Just for my
5 curiosity, what is the difference if you have...
6 what's the difference in time and what was the cost?

7 Like, what makes it a significant threshold for
8 you?

9 JUSTIN DONLON: Mm-hmm, so I think specific costs,
10 we'd have to get back to you on, but that's certainly
11 something that we could provide.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: And timeline?

13 JUSTIN DONLON: In terms of what it would have
14 been modular and what are the... (CROSS-TALK)

15 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Yeah, you mentioned the
16 cost...

17 JUSTIN DONLON: Yeah...

18 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: and the timing for
19 (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

20 JUSTIN DONLON: Yeah, so let me follow up with
21 that specifically...

22 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay, yeah, it would be
23 helpful to know. I have another modular project on
24 the other side on Bushwick that's going up really
25 fast. And, I... as someone who's formerly worked in

1 construction, I'm really a big fan of modular,
2 construction. So I was excited that this was
3 happening. I'm curious to understand more how we
4 can...

5 JUSTIN DONLON: Sure

6 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: incorporate this type of
7 method into HPD projects. So it's more from my
8 curiosity. It's not a an attack at all.

9 JUSTIN DONLON: Yeah, yeah. And then just to be
10 clear on that, and then certainly as an agency, it's
11 not something we're opposed to exploring in the
12 future. You know, it always really just comes down to
13 feasibility and timing and things like that.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay.

15 JUSTIN DONLON: Yeah.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: And any adjustments that
17 were made from the feedback from the community board?

18 THOMAS CAMPBELL: We made a commitment to 35% of
19 local hiring.

20 And, first, I just wanna address that I share
21 your sentiment regarding module. We're very excited
22 about that, because it's a in the (INAUDIBLE)
23 delivery method it's something that we would love to
24 grow with. Just turns out that, for this particular
25

1 project, it's way more expensive than conventional,
2 but we'll get back to the specifics as mentioned.

3
4 A 35% local hiring goal is good, because with
5 modular we were only able to offer that with the
6 podium and below because the superstructure would be
7 shipped in from somewhere else. Now we can spread
8 that 35% requirement across the entire building,
9 which is gonna be more, massively more local hiring.

10 And we...

11 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: What's the local hiring
12 look like? Is it primarily construction? Is it post
13 construction? And, you know, is it long term or short
14 term?

15 THOMAS CAMPBELL: Certainly, a 35% is our
16 construction jobs, real construction jobs, not just
17 laborers, but actual skilled trades, you know, the
18 main construction jobs. And that's where a lot of the
19 economics are generated.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay.

21 THOMAS CAMPBELL: We haven't discussed post
22 construction, but we're... we haven't been asked
23 about that, but we have a solid commitment to provide
24 and building service to surpassing that number in
25 terms of building service workers post construction.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: And who is your primary
3 partner for funneling or engaging local hire?

4 THOMAS CAMPBELL: So, we are working with the BID,
5 local BID, Bill... (CROSS-TALK)

6 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Which one?

7 THOMAS CAMPBELL: Bill Wilkins and his team.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: The LDC?

9 THOMAS CAMPBELL: LDC...

10 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay, yeah, yeah.

11 THOMAS CAMPBELL: LDC, which is... (CROSS-TALK)

12 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Yeah, yeah.

13 THOMAS CAMPBELL: not far away from our site.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Yeah.

15 THOMAS CAMPBELL: That's really who we met with
16 several times, and we've done the site tour with
17 them. And they're capable and I'm excited to work
18 with them.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay. Okay, I think those
20 are my only questions. I appreciate the four-bedroom
21 and an effort to put in more three-bedroom. I would
22 love to ,you know, this is a hill for me to die on,
23 is not the one-bedroom model. I know what the purpose
24 is that are serving for studio and one-bedrooms and
25 that's important, but especially for this part of the

1 district where we have multiple generations living
2 in, uhm, I really appreciate the effort to push that.
3 And I hope HPD continues to challenge itself to meet
4 those goals for families living in New York City,
5 thank you.

6 THOMAS CAMPBELL: Thank you.

7 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Thank you, I just have a
8 question here. How well utilized is the existing
9 municipal parking lot, and did you encounter any
10 opposition to losing it?

11 ANNABELLE MEUNIER: To answer that question, we
12 can get back to you on the utilization. I believe
13 that it was determined by DOT to be underutilized.
14 And we have not received opposition.

15 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Okay, thank you.

16 And then my last question. Prior to the approval
17 of City of Yes for Housing Opportunity in an R6
18 District, you were restricted to an FAR of 2.43. R6
19 now allows you to build up to 3.9 FAR, were there any
20 discussions to adding additional floor area to this
21 project to yield additional affordable units? And if
22 so, why did you decide against revising this plan?

23 ANNABELLE MEUNIER: I'd like to ask Paul to come
24 up to discuss.
25

2 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Just, we'll have to
3 administer the oath really quickly, so raise your
4 right hand...

5 PAÚL DUSTON-MUÑOZ: All right, Paúl Duston-Muñoz.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do you affirm to tell the
7 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth
8 in your testimony before this subcommittee, and in
9 answer to council member questions?

10 PAÚL DUSTON-MUÑOZ: Yes, I do.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

12 PAÚL DUSTON-MUÑOZ Almost good afternoon. Almost
13 good afternoon, everyone. We're excited to be here,
14 thank you for having us.

15 Short answer on this is we're studying this right
16 now. Obviously, City of Yes, a lot of that rollout is
17 new, and so, we're looking into it and trying to see
18 what's feasible.

19 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Okay.

20 Thank you for that response. Obviously, in hopes
21 that you continue to communicate with the Council
22 Member and with the HPD and so on and so forth to
23 figure that out with everyone that's within the plan.

24 Then my final question, I understand that you
25 have been in conversations with the MTA given the

2 proximity to the Grand Avenue Subway Station. Has
3 this created any challenges for the project? Are you
4 able to provide any details in any of your
5 conversations with the MTA?

6 ANNABELLE MEUNIER: I'll just say I think HPD has
7 been coordinating with the MTA for a while. I don't
8 believe we've been, uh, encountered any particular
9 issues. We've been responsive to their requests for
10 the space that they'll need for the accessibility
11 improvements.

12 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Okay.

13 Okay, thank you, uh, just one quick round if
14 Council Member Nurse has any additional questions?

15 Okay, thank you so much, the applicant panel is
16 now excused.

17 Counsel, are there any members of the public who
18 wish to testify on this item?

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I don't have any.

20 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Is there anyone here in
21 the gallery?

22 Okay, seeing none - there being no members of the
23 public who wish to testify regarding the three
24 Preconsidered LU items for 581 Grant Avenue, the

2 public hearing is now closed, and the items are laid
3 over.

4 And that concludes today's business. I would like
5 to thank any members of the public, my colleagues,
6 Subcommittee counsel, Land Use staff, and the
7 Sergeant at Arms for your participation today.

8 This meeting is now hereby adjourned. (Gaveling
9 Out)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date February 20, 2025