

SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITINGS

AND DISPOSITIONS

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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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June 12, 2025
Start: 10:13 a.m.
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HELD AT: 250 BROADWAY - COMMITTEE ROOM, 16TH
FLOOR

B E F O R E: Kamillah M. Hanks, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Christopher Marte
Yusef Salaam

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A P P E A R A N C E S

James Tschikov, Senior Manhattan Planner at New
York City Housing Preservation and Development

Matthew Gross, Managing Partner at Urban
Builders Collaborative Lettire

Fernando Alvarez, Associate Principal Technical
Director at Magnusson Architect and Planning

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SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: This is a microphone
check for the Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public
Sittings and Dispositions, located on the 16th Floor,
recorded on June 12, 2025, by Pat Kurzyna.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning, good
morning. Welcome to the New York City Council hearing
on the Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Sittings and
Dispositions.

At this time, please silence all
electronics, and do not approach the dais.

If you have any questions or concerns or
are testifying, please contact a Sergeant-at-Arms.

Chair, you may begin.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: [GAVEL] Good morning,
and welcome to the meeting of the Subcommittee on
Landmarks, Public Sittings and Dispositions. I am
Council Member Kamillah Hanks, and I'm the Chair of
the Subcommittee.

Today, I'm joined by my Colleague,
Council Member Salaam.

Today, we'll be holding one hearing
followed by votes on four... Okay. Apologies. Today,
we'll be holding one hearing, but before we begin

with today's agenda, I will remind everyone that this meeting is being held in a hybrid format.

For members of the public who wish to testify remotely, we ask that you first register online and that you may do so now by visiting www.council.nyc.gov/landuse to sign up and to sign into the Zoom and remain signed in until you have testified.

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

For anyone wishing to submit a written testimony on the items being heard today, we ask that you please send it via email at landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov. Include the land use number and the project name on the subject line. Video and audio testimony will not be accepted.

I want to remind the members of the public that this is a government proceeding and that decorum will be observed at all times. As such, members of the public shall remain silent unless and until called to testify.

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

So, today I'm going to open the public hearing for Land Use item 313 through 316 for Carmen Villegas Apartments, an application by New York City Housing Preservation and Development, Xylem Project, and Urban Builders Collaborative for a zoning map amendment, zoning text amendment for an acquisition development site by the City, and a designation of an urban development action area and an urban development action area project and disposition of City-owned property to facilitate the development of affordable housing and community facility space in Council Member Ayala's District in Manhattan.

Appearing today on this proposal is James Tschikov, Senior Manhattan Planner at HPD, Matthew Gross, Managing Partner at Urban Builders Collaborative Lettire, and Fernando Alvarez,

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Associate Principal Technical Director at Magnusson
Architect and Planning.

Again, those wishing to testify must
register online by visiting the Council's website at
council.nyc/landuse. Panelists, your microphone is on
is when the red light is showing.

Counsel, would you please administer the
affirmation?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Panelists, would you
please raise your right hand and state your name for
the record?

FERNANDO ALVAREZ: Fernando Alvarez.

JAMES TSCHIKOV: James Tschikov.

MATTHEW GROSS: Matthew Gross.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: And do you affirm to
tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the
truth in your testimony before this Subcommittee and
in answer to all Council Member questions?

FERNANDO ALVAREZ: Yes, I do.

MATTHEW GROSS: Yes.

JAMES TSCHIKOV: Yes, I do.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you so much,
applicant panelists.

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

The applicant panel may now begin.

JAMES TSCHIKOV: All right. Thank you so much. Good morning, Council Members, and thank you for having us here today. My name is James Tschikov, and I'm the Senior Manhattan Planner in HPD's Division of Planning and Predevelopment, joined by representatives of the Development Team, Fernando Alvarez from Magnusson Architecture and Planning and Matthew Gross from the Urban Builders Collaborative.

We're excited to be here for this milestone in ULURP to present the Carmen Villegas Apartments Senior Housing Project, named after the late East Harlem community advocate. So, you can go to the next slide, please.

So, beginning with a bit of land use background, the development site will be located on the underutilized parking lot of the privately owned Casita Park at Block 1638, part of Lot 1. Casita Park HDLC is currently owned by Ascendant Neighborhood Development, and the applicant team for this ULURP

comprises of HPD, Ascendant Neighborhood Development,
Xylem Projects, and the Urban Builders Collaborative,
who are our development partners here. The
application was certified on Monday, February 3rd,
2025, and the proposed project will be a new 28-story
residential building with approximately 210
affordable senior housing units to be developed under
HPD's SARA program. You can advance the slide,
please.

So, here's a quick aerial view for more
context. The development site is highlighted in red
on part of Lot 1, and it'll be using development
rights from the entire zoning lot highlighted in blue
to achieve its height and floor area. The proposed
project will be located on the corner of Park Avenue
and East 110th, just north of the NYCHA Clinton
Houses. Next slide, please.

And to facilitate the proposed
development, the applicant team proposes the
following land use actions. HPD proposes the
acquisition of previously City-owned property by the
City on Block 1638, part of Lot 1, which is the
development site that I highlighted, and subsequent
disposition. Lot 1 was previously conveyed to

Ascendant Neighborhood Development through a UDAAP in 2000 for the development of a six-story residential building known as Casita Park, as well as the parking lot, but the site requires new approvals to allow for the redevelopment of the parking lot. The acquisition and disposition will occur simultaneously in conjunction with the project's closing. Ascendant, Xylem Projects, and Urban Builders Collaborative propose to rezone the area that is highlighted in the dotted black line to an R9-1 district and a zoning text amendment to map an MIH area. And so now I'll turn it over to our development partners to speak in more detail about the project.

MATTHEW GROSS: Thank you, James. Next slide, please.

All right. So, my name is Matthew Gross, a partner at Urban Builders Collaborative. With Nick and Gerard Lettire, Lettire Construction's been based on 110th Street for actually 45 years up in East Harlem, and just an honor and privilege to be part of such a great project with a longstanding nonprofit in our community in East Harlem, Ascendant Neighborhood Development Corporation, and a certified M/WBE Harlem-based emerging developer, Nana Lynch. We're

just a Harlem-based team, and we're just really proud that we can recognize Carmen Villegas, such an impactful force in East Harlem, was a really active member of Community Board 11, and we really tried to include everything we could in this project that would embody her lasting impact. So next slide.

As James said, we have a 28-story, 210 senior building. This is poured in place. We have a setback at the sixth floor, some really great outdoor space there. On the ground floor, we have Salsa Way, which will lead to the open courtyard that we'll share with Casita Park, the existing senior building on the corner of 111th and Park. And Fernando, our architect from Magnusson, will talk to us about some of these other sustainability features that we've included to really go above and beyond and again embody that impact that Carmen had in East Harlem. Next slide.

You have the site plan up here. I really just want to highlight the actual footprint that you can see on the bottom here. We have the three entrances. We have a community facility space for SAGE, one of the largest LGBTQ organizations and support organizations in the country, but very active

1 in New York City. They have a location over in
2 Central Harlem. They're going to be relocating here.
3 We're really excited, so you can see their entrance
4 there closer to Park on 110th, then you can see the
5 separate residential entrance, which will have 24-
6 hour security, and then Salsa Way, which will be an
7 open corridor there right into Casita Park. And as
8 you can see on the north side, we've identified the
9 entrance to the existing Casita Park. That's their
10 main entrance, but they will be able to continue to
11 access through Salsa Way into that shared courtyard.
12 Next slide.

14 Highlighting the unit mix here, with our
15 Council Member, we've been working to increase the
16 number of one-bedrooms, and we were successful in
17 doing that, so that we could get the split between
18 studios at 75 percent and the one-bedrooms up to 25
19 percent. I know we've been working with HPD to try to
20 increase the program in general for SARA to have more
21 family units, so fine balance, but I'm happy that I
22 believe that we've reached a really good point. And
23 just highlighting the set-aside for the formerly
24 homeless, and that will be age-restricted down to 55
25 years of age. It allows them to identify a bigger

pool of people. The other 70 percent, which will go through the lottery, will be 62 years of age and up. Next slide.

And here, just to highlight, we've been awarded project-based vouchers from NYCHA for all 210 apartments, and seniors will only pay 30 percent of whatever that income is. That income could be zero to up to 50 percent of the area median income, and so they will pay whatever portion that is. Next slide.

Again, highlighting the ground floor and the second floor will have an approximately 8,000 square foot community facility space for SAGE, which targets LGBTQ-plus population, and that will be operated separately, separate entrance. They will be a tenant in the building in that community facility space. We're really excited. They have such a host of comprehensive services, which are listed here, and just really leveraging all the partnerships they already have in Harlem, Union Settlement, all of the hospital systems, really just a linkage to grow, you know, just the community support. Separately, they will also be providing services for the seniors through the Human Resource Administration SARA grant. That's a separate service that just the tenants will

have access to, whereas the entire community will have access to the ground and second floor community center. Next slide.

I'll pass it over to Magnusson, just from a design architecture standpoint and sustainability.

FERNANDO ALVAREZ: Good morning, Council Members. Thank you for having us here. My name is Fernando Alvarez. I'm an architect with Magnusson Architecture and Planning. We are the architects, designers, and architects of record for the building. The building, it's a 28-story all-electric building, has been designed to obtain Passive House Certification. The mechanical systems are going to be based ground source. The mechanical systems are based on a geothermal heat source heating. Basically, we're going to go down 600 feet. We're going to extract that energy from the ground, and that's going to feed our cooling and heating systems. It's fully sustainable. The individual apartments will have their own units with their own thermostats, but everything will be centralized as an all-electric building. The building also has a design with a solar canopy and what we call a building photovoltaic integrated in the façade facing south, so it's going

to perform with their own energy. This energy will go to the main building's electrical panel and will feed down public spaces. Some of the resiliency measures that we have in this building include a dry-proof cellar. The utility rooms have been designed on the second floor because the building was designed on the 28-flood plane, so in case that there's in the future the levels of water rise, all the utilities are going to be safe on the second floor and then distributed up and down to the ground floor, of course. Common amenities in the building include alternating lounges facing south where the older adults and tenants can meet and also a series of laundry rooms in those levels. In addition to, like Matt said, in the six-floor setback, there are multiple rooms, recreation rooms, there's an exercise room, library, community room, main laundry room, and also there's a connection with the outdoor landscape for passive recreation for the residents of the building.

And that concludes our presentation.

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you so much. So, I have a few questions. Can you briefly mention the background of the site and explain why the process to

acquire and then dispose of the site for development
was necessary to facilitate the development?

JAMES TSCHIKOV: Yeah, absolutely. So this
site was previously City-owned property with several
lots that was disposed through a UDAAP action in the
year 2000 and consolidated into one lot. At the time,
the lot was conveyed for a HUD Section 202 project
and the regulatory agreements that were imposed in
the deed and the regulatory agreement was mainly for
that project and inclusive of that parking lot, and
so it didn't allow for the subdivision. The
developer, even though it's privately owned, they
cannot subdivide without the City's consent, and so
the City has to reacquire a portion of it and engage
in a new regulatory agreement that will allow
financing, subdivision, and redevelopment of the
parking lot. But the parking itself, just for the
record, it was a zoning requirement and it was not a
requirement that was baked into the regulatory
agreement.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you for that. Do
you have a plan to address the public safety concerns
through lighting measures, especially on Park Avenue?

MATTHEW GROSS: The building's fully secure. We'll definitely have enhanced lighting. You know, just having the presence there is going to enhance the streetscape. We will have 24-hour security for the residential entrance on 110th, but on the Salsa Way will also be secure. So definitely we will take all measures necessary and any additional feedback is always welcome, but I think we've addressed the security appropriately.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: I appreciate that. So, I'm going to ask some questions on behalf of Deputy Speaker Ayala. So, Deputy Speaker asks, while I appreciate that you have added a few more one-bedrooms to this project, along with many of my Colleagues here at the City Council and seniors we represent, have to consistently voice our displeasure with the disproportionate number of studios that are included in these buildings for seniors. Are there any thoughts about changing this SARA term sheet to facilitate more one-bedroom units? And if not, how does HPD justify this unit mix that favors studio units? I think you addressed it.

JAMES TSCHIKOV: Yeah. I think just to speak from HPD's perspective, you know, we are

absolutely listening to this feedback. We've received this feedback both from the community members during our Community Board 11 hearings as well as from the Deputy Speaker. You know, I think we'd like to continue those policy and finance discussions at HPD. I think, you know, every senior project depends on, you know, the development team's ability to present the most appropriate unit mix for the project and the community, taking a look at that holistically. I think for this site specifically, you know, it's a very constrained site. It's a parking lot that's less than, you know, 10,000 square feet. And in the case here, you know, the idea was to maximize the number of units possible to get seniors housed. And this proposal is, at the moment, generally in line with some other SARA proposals. From HPD's perspective, there's a lot of seniors on waitlists citywide. Some of those folks are unhoused. Some of those folks are on Section 8 waitlists. Or some of them are just in old walk-up apartments with mobility issues, and they need to get into modern and resilient housing. And so, you know, right now the priority is to get those folks into that permanent housing and build as many units as possible. But at the same time, we

understand that some of these unit sizes are smaller,
and so projects are encouraged to, you know, build
that terrace space, build the extra community rooms,
try to get the socialized spaces as much as possible.
I think by tapping into a community facility like
SAGE that is already serving seniors in the
neighborhood, they're able to provide not only a
connection with the seniors in the project, but also
at the community at large. And yeah, just one last
point. Actually, today I'm attending a presentation
by the Urban Design Forum, which is doing a
fellowship on aging in place, and it's actually HPD
is the partner in that program, and we're hoping to
learn some insights there. They're going to issue a
report, and hopefully there can be continue
conversations on this topic.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Well, it was very
exciting, very innovative. I was very impressed. So
thank you so much.

I just want to recognize some of my
Colleagues, if anyone has any questions for this
panel.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Yeah. Actually,
I'm familiar with this space as I lived in Schaumburg

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Plaza on 110th Street and Fifth Avenue for my youth,
and my mother still lives there, and so it's pretty
exciting to see something coming up on the corner of
110th Street and Park Avenue on the northeast side.

This building is an extension of the
building on 111th Street and Park Avenue.

MATTHEW GROSS: It'll be a standalone
building, but it is...

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Not connected at
all.

JAMES TSCHIKOV: They will only be
connected through the shared Salsa Way entry point on
110th so they will share the courtyard.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Yeah, yeah.

MATTHEW GROSS: I tried to come dressed
appropriately today So, but yeah, no, they will be
standalone, separate and operating buildings.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Gotcha, gotcha.
Okay.

MATTHEW GROSS: And I don't want to take
too much time, but I mean, we're excited. The
geothermal idea here is that it's going to, the
geothermal will power the new construction building,
but we are going to have some additional capacity,

and so we're going to have a manifold to tie into so that we can, when Casita Park is able to get the funding sources together to do an upgrade, rehab, it'd be a phase two to make sure that those seniors are also getting, you know, modern and resilient housing.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: So that brings me to my next question. And just for my edification and maybe for the public's as well, is this like a free energy thing in terms of being able to tap into the energy from the earth? Because of course, as you know, as a lot of the buildings in our communities and in our Districts are being developed or being retrofitted to become more green, some of those costs are pushed off onto the existing tenants, and many of them, and this is the reason why my question is coming from this space is because many of them are not really able to work again, and so these are seniors that are really on a fixed income. Everything in New York City is becoming more and more expensive so I just was really wondering, what are the costs for the tenants and will there be any savings that they will experience in a green, fully electric building?

MATTHEW GROSS: So there will be... and great question. There's a lot of direct impacts of all of the sustainable features. So, the tenants will only be paying for electric bills. And those electric bills will... they really should not rise. There will not be much escalation because we have a ground source from the water, right, oh, excuse me, groundwater source that's going to be 600 to 800 feet below that's consistent, and so taking that and drawing that and utilizing that and that heat pump system will allow these bills for these tenants to remain essentially static, right? I mean, that is the goal and potentially even to come down so most of the solar is more for the owners, the non-profit M/WBE and us to just manage the building costs, right? That's going to be the common area. So the building integrated photovoltaic, the rooftop solar, most of that is all common areas that the tenants wouldn't pay for. But really the geothermal system, and again, like trying to create these districts and really that's what we see as part of the future of sustainability is this is not a new system, geothermal, it's actually an old, it's just sort of coming back into play, which is great, and the

incentives help, right, so we have an award from the
New York State Energy Research Development Authority,
NYSERDA. We got part of the Building of Excellence
Program. We also have gotten some Resolution A funds
specifically targeting the sustainability and also
the Inflation Reduction Act, which seems to currently
still be intact today, but that actually will help
with about 40 to 50 percent of the actual
installation and the equipment we would get back. So
it allows us to do these measures, you know, these,
but, you know, kind of going off a little bit, I get
excited about the project, but just to bring it back
to the question is the direct impact to the tenants
is really to have extremely low and stable electric
bills for them, you know, and the, all the expenses
and everything, this is a project-based Section 8, so
any rental increases to them are picked up by the
Section 8 voucher. That's technically how it works.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Gotcha.

FERNANDO ALVAREZ: Excuse me. I'm going to
add on the technical side, I don't know about bills,
I hate them, but on a technical side, NYSERDA, and
that's my bad, I didn't mention, the building is part
of the Buildings of Excellence. By being Passive

House, what that means, there's an extra insulation in the building, the windows are triple glazed, and the energy, and the way it works is during the winter months, the windows allow all this natural heat from the sun to come in, so you're not cranking your HVAC systems or you're heating. And during the summer is the opposite, the UV reflects this, and by being insulated, it maintains the temperature, it's not like the old buildings, right? It's 92 degrees outside, it's 192 inside. No, this maintains the temperature by being hyper-insulated, and there's constant ventilation too. So, the constant ventilation avoids the excessive use of air conditioning. That's part of the building science behind that.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: This is very exciting. I guess the last point, I don't know if this is necessarily a question, but I know it's come up in my District, in particular District 9, which is literally right across the street, right? A lot of the tenants have raised concerns about some of the equipment that they have has to be on 100 percent of the time. And I know some of the savings have been, the trickle-down effect is, hey, well just turn off

your television, unplug your microwave, things like that to keep the cost down, and I'm just wondering, in terms of those considerations, what thoughts are there on that?

MATTHEW GROSS: The constant current running through all of the outlets and the RFIs.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Because there will be some individuals as they age, we have a very resilient senior community that want to be in their homes, but some of them need that type of service as well in their homes.

MATTHEW GROSS: In terms of extra power usage due to medical equipment, I think you're sort of referring to, so we've done a couple of these types of SARA buildings recently that have been operating for a couple of years, and we have tenants with this equipment. We're not seeing significant surges in their bills so I think there's a perception, and you would think that it would, but I think we're not seeing that in the working buildings now, in some of these senior buildings, so I don't think that this equipment is extracting that much. And I think there's ways to work with us. We're community developers in the team. I think we work

with tenants who, there's still hardships, even though they're on Section 8. There's still going to be issues, and that's where the social service comes in, just to make sure with the linkages and any programming. If there were some spike in their bill, we typically will just troubleshoot. It could be a meter, it could be something else. So, we haven't found that there's going to be exponential power usage with any ongoing equipment like that.

FERNANDO ALVAREZ: I'll add one more thing. The building is under the EGCC program, so we have low flow plumbing fixtures and high efficiency lighting. So by having that, it's not like the old times when you got to turn off lights. No, EGCC helps us because their guidelines are very strict.

MATTHEW GROSS: Including sensors in the common areas and just comprehensive measures to try to save all that as much as possible.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you so much. Before we excuse this applicant panel, I'd like to recognize Council Member Marte has joined us.

And it is truly an incredible project.
I'd love to chat with you offline, but thank you.
This applicant panel is now excused.

JAMES TSCHIKOV: Thank you so much.

MATTHEW GROSS: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Okay, Council Members,
are there any members of the public, excuse me,
Counsel, are there any members of the public who wish
to testify on this item?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: No, there are not.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Okay. Being no
questions, sorry. So, if there are any remote or
public participants who wish to testify that have not
already done so, please press the raise hand button
now. And if you are here with us in person, please
see one of the Sergeant-at-Arms to fill out a speaker
card.

With there being no other members of the
public who wish to testify regarding LU-313 through
LU-316, Carmen Villegas Apartments, this public
hearing is now closed.

That concludes today's business. And I
would like to thank the members of the public, my
Colleagues, the Subcommittee, Counsel, Land Use

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Staff, and Sergeant-at-Arms for your participation
today.

This meeting is hereby adjourned. [GAVEL]

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 July 30, 2025