

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND
MARITIME USES

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June 20, 2019
Start: 1:07 p.m.
Recess: 1:22 p.m.

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

B E F O R E: ADRIENNE ADAMS
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Peter A. Koo

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Genevieve Michael
Assistant Commissioner for Governmental Affairs
New York Department of Housing, Preservation and
Development

Randall Powell
Co-Founder and CEO
Infinite Horizons, LLC

1 SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING
AND MARITIME USES

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2 Sound check. Today's date is June 20,
3 2019. Today's subcommittee hearing is on Landmarks
4 and is being recorded by Dean Hope.

5 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: [gavel] Good
6 afternoon. Welcome to this meeting of the
7 Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Siting and Maritime
8 Uses. I'm Council Member Adrienne Adams, the Chair
9 of this Subcommittee. We're joined today by Council
10 Member Peter Koo. Today we will hear LU-467 and LU-
11 468, two applications submitted by the Department of
12 Housing, Preservation and Development related to the
13 784 Courtlandt Project in Chair Salamanca's district
14 in the Bronx. LU-467 is an application submitted
15 pursuant to Section 505 of Article 15 of the General
16 Municipal Law of the State of New York and Section
17 197-c of the New York City Charter for the fourth
18 amendment to the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal plan
19 for the Melrose Common Urban Renewal area. The
20 amendment would remove a 45' height restrictions from
21 URP site 15 imposed by the current plan for certain
22 buildings in the R7-2 and R7-A districts. LU-468 is
23 an application submitted pursuant to Article 16 of
24 the General Municipal Law for Approval of an urban
25 development action area designated for the property

2 located at 359 East 157th Street and 784 Courtlandt
3 Avenue, Block 2404, Lots 1 and 2. The approval of an
4 urban development action area project for such area
5 and pursuant to 197-c of the New York City Charter
6 for the disposition of such property to a developer
7 selected by HPD. The related applications would
8 exempt the development site from a height limit to
9 facilitate the construction of a seven-story mixed
10 use building with affordable residential units,
11 ground floor retail space and community facility
12 space. I will now introduce the panel. We have
13 Genevieve Michael from HPD and Randall Powell from
14 Infinite Horizons, LLC. Before you begin, counsel
15 with swear you in.

16 COUNSEL: Please raise your right hands
17 and say your names.

18 PANEL: Genevieve Michael

19 COUNSEL: Do you affirm to tell the
20 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in
21 your testimony before this Subcommittee in answer to
22 all Council Member questions?

23 PANEL: Yes, yes.

24 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Okay, you may begin.
25

2 GENEVIEVE MICHAEL: Great, Land Use

3 numbers 467 and 468 are related ULURP actions seeking
4 UDOP [phonetic] designation, project and disposition
5 approval for two City owned sites as well as an
6 amendment to the Melrose Common Urban Renewal Plan in
7 order to facilitate the development of a project
8 known as 784 Courtlandt Avenue located at Block 2404,
9 Lots 1 and 2, in Bronx Council district 17. Land Use
10 number 467 is related to the fourth amended Melrose
11 Common Urban Renewal Plan, the disposition area as a
12 designated urban renewal site of the Melrose Common
13 Urban Renewal area. The amendment to the plan will
14 exempt Site 15, Block 2404, Lots 1 and 2 from the
15 height restriction of 45' within R72 or R7A zoning
16 districts. This will facilitate development as per
17 zoning of a residential building of seven stories
18 with commercial and community facility space. Land
19 Use 468 will facilitate the development as per zoning
20 of a seven-story residential building with commercial
21 and community facility space under HPD's neighborhood
22 construction program or NCP. Under the program's
23 guidelines, sponsors purchase City owned or
24 privately-owned property in order to construct multi-
25 family buildings creating up to 45 units of

1 affordable rental housing on in sale sites. The
2 newly constructed buildings provide housing to low
3 income, moderate income and middle-income families as
4 well as a portion set aside for formerly homeless
5 families and individuals. The City will sell the
6 disposition area to its designated sponsor for the
7 nominal price of \$1 per tax lot. The sponsor will
8 also deliver an enforcement note and mortgage for the
9 remainder of the appraised value. On November 24,
10 2015, HPD issued a request for proposals geared
11 toward certified MWBE organizations that would be
12 given the opportunity to submit a proposal to develop
13 the lots as low income rental housing. On January
14 12, 2017, Infinite Horizons, LLC was selected as a
15 sponsor and under NCP guidelines the sponsor proposes
16 to build one building containing approximately 20
17 dwelling units. There will be a mixture of unit
18 types including four, one bedrooms; eleven, two
19 bedrooms; and five, three bedroom apartments. Rent
20 will be affordable to families with incomes between
21 30% and 80% of area median income. Formerly homeless
22 tenants, referred by DHS and other City agencies,
23 will pay up to 30% of their income as rent. All
24 units will be subject to rent stabilization. The
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2 sponsor also proposes to construct approximately
3 2,278 gross square feet of commercial space and
4 approximately 6,265 gross square feet of community
5 facility space on the disposition area for which the
6 uses have yet to be decided. In order to enable
7 construction of the project, HPD is before the
8 Subcommittee seeking approval for both preconsidered
9 Land Use items. Thank you.

10 RANDALL POWELL: Hi, good afternoon, my
11 name is Randall Powell. I'm one of the members of
12 Infinite Horizons and the development team. I will
13 briefly go through the PowerPoint presentation that
14 you guys have to talk about the project. Again, as
15 stated earlier, the project is in the Melrose Common
16 area section of the Bronx. It consists of two lots.
17 The development team will consist of Infinite
18 Horizons as the MBE co-developer along with MBD
19 Community Housing Corporation, a longstanding non-
20 profit in the Bronx, FGH Corp. as co-development
21 partner as well as the general contractor. OCV
22 Architects, a longstanding design firm has been
23 selected as the architectural and design company that
24 did the design on the project. If you move to page
25 number 5, the site conditions include Blocks 2404,

2 Lots 1 and 2 currently owned by the Department of
3 Housing, Preservation and Development. These have
4 been infill sites located in the Melrose Section of
5 the Bronx, have been vacant and underutilized for
6 several years. One of the missions of the
7 development team is to actually take underutilized
8 sites and turn them into affordable housing.

9 Currently the sites have overgrown grass and some
10 minor dumping. If you look at slide, page number 6,
11 it gives you some various photos of the location on
12 the corner of 784 Courtlandt Avenue and 359 East
13 157th Street. Again, the building program will be a
14 seven-story masonry building with 20 units with an
15 elevator consisting of 22,170 square feet, commercial
16 space as well as retail space and some minor
17 ancillary space in the cellar and the first floor for
18 a total building square footage of 34,167 square feet
19 respectively. As you move through the slide deck,
20 you will see on slide deck number 8, you have a west
21 elevation of the building that gives the location of
22 the entrances on the first floor and as the building
23 goes up. Seven stories above on the next slide deck
24 on page number 9, you actually have the south
25 elevation. It also shows various entrances into the

1 building as well as the bulkhead and the roof just to
2 give a design outline of the project. Moving on to
3 slide deck number 10, you actually have a cellar
4 space. We highlighted that there will be a bike
5 storage. We're trying to encompass a lot of the new
6 features that a lot of the new buildings are adapting
7 to which includes bike storage as well as commercial
8 cellar space, storage space and a retail, and as well
9 as cellar storage space in the community facility
10 along with all the other utility rooms. Moving on to
11 slide deck number 11, you will see that the
12 commercial space is highlighted in the off pink color
13 and the community facility space is highlighted in
14 the dark orange/brown color. The entrance for the
15 residential space will be on Courtlandt Avenue.
16 That's the staircase highlighted in the blue in the
17 far-right corner and the canopy that shows the
18 entrance to the first-floor ground space for the
19 retail space. On East 157th Street, you will see
20 that the entrance for the first-floor ground of the
21 community facility space is highlighted. That's
22 where that access to that space will actually be
23 located. As we move along to deck number 12, you
24 look at the second floor of the community facility
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1 space which takes up quite a large portion of that
2 second-floor space along with another apartment.
3 There's also an elevator that will be accessible to
4 the community facility space for additional uses just
5 to make it a more pleasing space. As you move on to
6 the third-floor plan, you have the units, that's
7 where some of the units start. You have the two
8 bedrooms on that and then we also have a community
9 room which is highlighted in green that will be open
10 to the community as well as a laundry room that's
11 highlighted in the light blue color and those spaces
12 will be accessible to the residents of the building
13 and if you look towards the laundry room and the
14 recreation space, there actually will be an offset
15 terrace that will be used by the residents of the
16 building as well. We felt like these design features
17 just make it more appealing and a better product for
18 the residents living in the building. Slide deck
19 number 14 is the typical floors 4 through 7 which
20 have again as mentioned earlier, one, two and three
21 bedroom apartments located throughout, again an
22 elevator building with staircases and then slide deck
23 number 15 we are also including the use of solar
24 panels as part of a green design element. We believe
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1 that the location of the building really is suitable
2 for incorporating some nice photovoltaic solar panels
3 on the site. Again, and not to reiterate too many of
4 the points already covered, the AMI's are gonna be 30
5 to 80% of AMI, moving over to slide deck number 17,
6 again mentioned they are 20% of the building will
7 consist of four bedrooms, 55% of the building will
8 consist of two bedrooms and 25% of the building will
9 consist of three bedrooms and we believe that a
10 family owned or a family designed building represents
11 a good mix. In this particular area, we know that
12 the Councilman is looking to have a lot of families
13 and keep families in the community, so this is kind
14 of what made our judgment towards creating this
15 family style building versus a larger institutional
16 style building. We believe that this will make a
17 very good home for the residents because it's a
18 little bit more intimate and the tenants can actually
19 meet each other and learn to work and live together,
20 and now we move on to slide deck number 18 which is
21 actually the AMI unit distribution and as mentioned
22 earlier, we have three homeless units, five units at
23 30% of AMI, two units at 40% of AMI, three units at
24 70% of AMI, and then seven units at 80% of AMI and
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2 again, we believe that this actually incorporated the
3 Councilman's wishes in terms of the dynamic of AMI's
4 as well as what we feel is appropriate for the
5 neighborhood and the demographic makeup. Again,
6 through the support of HPD and the local Council, we
7 would like to apply for a low-income housing tax
8 credit application for this fall. We've been working
9 closely with the support of HPD to start looking at
10 underwriting and developing a budget. If everything
11 goes well, we would like to break ground between the
12 end of this year and early next year depending on how
13 everything is structured and financed and as we close
14 out on the ULURP action, again, we've already started
15 ramping up the design plans, all the environmental
16 work has been done and on the last page, deck number
17 20 gives a rough timeline or kinda where we stand at
18 with the project and we look forward to having any
19 questions or comments regarding the presentation.
20 Thank you very much.

21 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Thank you very much.

22 It looks lovely actually. How does the community
23 feel about this addition?

24 RANDALL POWELL: It was well received.

25 We spoke to the Community Board. We got Community

2 Board approval. We also spoke to the Bronx Borough
3 president's office. They also gave their blessings
4 and their approval of the project so now we're
5 looking for the same support from the Council Member
6 and the Committee itself.

7 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Do you know of any
8 specific concerns that the Council Member has at this
9 time?

10 GENEVIEVE MICHAEL: I think the only
11 concern that I have heard as we are still hashing out
12 the details of the AMI mix. I think he has, you
13 know, certainly pushed for us to figure out if we can
14 get those any deeper. It certainly is gonna create
15 some financing challenges for us, but we are in
16 active conversations with him around that.

17 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Okay, that's what I
18 would have thought but I'm glad you said so. I
19 didn't want to just blurt that out. Well, I thank
20 you very much for your testimony here today, both of
21 you. I'm particularly thrilled at the fact that we
22 are doing this through MBE. Always impressed by
23 Infinite Horizons so I think that we have an
24 excellent partner with the organization so I thank
25 them very much always for their hard work in our

2 communities, particularly communities of color so
3 really, really happy about that and I thank you very
4 much for your testimony today. Thank you.

5 GENEVIEVE MICHAEL: Thank you so much.

6 RANDALL POWELL: Thank you very much.

7 CHAIRPERSON ADAMS: Are there any members
8 of the public that wish to testify on this matter
9 today? Seeing none, the public hearings on LU's 467
10 and 468 are now closed and the items are laid over.
11 That concludes today's business. I thank Counsel, I
12 thank my staff, members of the public, my colleagues
13 for today's hearing. This meeting is hereby
14 adjourned. [gavel]

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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 July 2, 2019