

Borough President Recommendation

City Planning Commission
120 Broadway, New York, NY 10007
Fax # (212) 720-3356

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Return this completed form with any attachments to the Calendar Information Office, City Planning Commission at the above address.
2. Send one copy with any attachments to the applicant's representative as indicated on the Notice of Certification.

Application #: **C 180404 PCM**

Docket Description:

IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by the Department of Parks and Recreation and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, pursuant to Section 197-c of the New York City Charter, for the site selection and acquisition of property located at 510 West 143th Street (Block 2074, Lot 146) for continued use as a community garden.

COMMUNITY BOARD NO: 9

BOROUGH: Manhattan

RECOMMENDATION

- APPROVE
- APPROVE WITH MODIFICATIONS/CONDITIONS (List below)
- DISAPPROVE
- DISAPPROVE WITH MODIFICATIONS/CONDITONS (Listed below)

EXPLANATION OF RECOMMENDATION – MODIFICATION/CONDITIONS (Attach additional sheets if necessary)

See Attached.

John A. Brewer

December 17, 2018

BOROUGH PRESIDENT

DATE



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

1 Centre Street, 19th floor, New York, NY 10007
(212) 669-8300 p (212) 669-4306 f
431 West 125th Street, New York, NY 10027
(212) 531-1609 p (212) 531-4615 f
www.manhattanbp.nyc.gov

Gale A. Brewer, Borough President

December 17, 2018

Recommendation on ULURP Application C 180404 PCM - Frank White Memorial Community Garden Addition by the Department of Parks and Recreation and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services

PROPOSED ACTION

The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) (The applicants) seek the site selection and acquisition approval for privately owned property located at 510 West 143rd Street (Block 2074, Lot 146) in an R6A zoning district in Hamilton Heights, Community District 9, Borough of Manhattan.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicants are proposing to acquire Block 2074, Lot 146 (Project Site) and assemble it with the Frank White Memorial Garden (Block 2074, Lots 45 and 46) which abuts it but has also been occupied by the gardeners since 1999. There are no plans for structures to be built at the site; the Project Site will be licensed through DPR's Green Thumb Program jointly with Lots 45 and 46 for continued use as a garden and passive open space. The continued use will be mandated through a declaration of restriction, as is the practice for all Green Thumb licenses. The Brotherhood Sister Sol (BHSS), whose offices are a half-block away from the Project Site, is the steward of the Frank White Memorial Garden.

The acquisition of the Project Site would permanently add 1,873 square-feet of lot area to the existing garden. No new structures are expected to be added to the garden as a result of this addition. The existing garden contains 12 wooden raised beds, 3 compost bins, and a one-story wooden shed.

BACKGROUND

Until 1989, when the Frank White Memorial Garden was founded, the lots occupied by the garden were vacant and often neglected by absentee property owners. Lots 45 and 46 have been the subject of In Rem foreclosures on more than one occasion. In 1974, the Project Site as well as lots 45 and 46 were foreclosed by the City for non-payment of taxes. Five years later a demolition permit was issued (DP 29-79) to demolish a building deemed unsafe on the Project

Site. It sat vacant ever since. In 1983, the Project Site in addition to Lots 45 and 46 was sold at an auction ordered by the Board of Estimate. Two years later the three lots were sold to the Church of God Prophecy who was headquartered in Tennessee at the time. Unfortunately, lots 45 and 46 were once again foreclosed by the City for non-payment of taxes. The Project Site, however, was retained by the Church of God Prophecy.

Despite the Church of God Prophecy's ownership of the Project Site, it has been occupied by the Frank White Memorial Garden for two decades. Lots 45 and 46 were licensed to community residents by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) for garden purposes in 1991. In 1999, the two lots were assigned to the DPR for garden purposes. Neighborhood residents served as the stewards for the garden at that time. The Project Site remained in private ownership. Two years later, the Brotherhood Sister Sol, a youth development organization, located their headquarters less than a block away from the garden. Soon after, they joined the gardeners in the stewardship of the garden.

The offices of Councilman Mark Levine and Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer have assisted in the acquisition of the Project Site. Both offices have allocated the capital funding necessary to acquire the lot.¹

Area Context

The Project Site is located in the Hamilton Heights neighborhood of Manhattan within Community District 9. It is less than one block from the eastern border of the Hamilton Heights Historic District designated in 1974. Five and six-story residential buildings, three-story brownstones, and community facilities typify the area's building form. The Project Site is located in a mid-block between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue. Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue are major thoroughfares typified by five and six-story mixed-use residential and commercial buildings with ground-floor retail uses.

The area surrounding the Project Site is rich with transportation options. It is within one-quarter of a mile of the 145th Street subway station serving the 1 train subway line at Broadway and the A/B/C/D 145th Street subway station at St. Nicholas Avenue. The Project Site is also within one block from the M4 and M5 bus stops located on Broadway, and the M100 and M101 bus stops located on Amsterdam Avenue. In addition, the Bx19 is just two blocks north of the Project Site.

¹ The Manhattan Borough President's Office will be allocating a total of \$500,000 split between two fiscal years: \$300,000 in FY 18 and \$200,000 in FY 19.

Within one-half mile of the Project Site there are a number of City and non-City facilities. There are several elementary schools and high schools such as the High School for Math, Science & Engineering. City College's Grove School of Engineering is also located nearby. Within two blocks of the Project Site there are two places of worship, the Convent Avenue Baptist Church and Our Lady of Lourdes, both of which are located within the Hamilton Heights Historic District. The Hamilton Grange Library is located two blocks north on West 145th Street and the U.S. Postal Service Hamilton Grange Station is located three blocks north on West 146th Street.

COMMUNITY BOARD RECOMMENDATION

On October 30, 2018, Community Board 10 held a public hearing on this matter. Following testimony a resolution was passed approving the acquisition of 510 West 143rd Street (Block 2074, Lot 146) to preserve the Frank White Memorial Garden. The resolution passed by a quorum vote of 18 in favor, 1 opposed, and 1 abstention.

BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

The value of community gardens such as the Frank White Memorial Community Garden must not be understated. In the midst of abandonment by delinquent land owners in communities like Hamilton Heights, neighborhood residents transform blighted private property into productive public social centers. Once littered with trash and inhabited by pests, community gardens now serve as fertile soil for plant life and social capital. They are a place where people and ideas mingle; they encourage a healthy diet, promote community engagement, and provide a place for educational programs. Sometimes they just provide a brief respite from the hustle and bustle of urban life. I understand that there are many priorities to consider and that Manhattan is facing a scarcity of developable land, but where we can, we must preserve and protect sites like the Frank White Memorial Garden.

The Frank White Memorial Garden is evidence of what can be achieved when good public policy meets neighborhood gumption. When the owners of lots 45 and 46 failed to pay their taxes (money that goes toward supporting our schools and other community needs) those lots went back into the City's hands. Rather than resell them (as was the practice in the 1990s) and return them to the tax roll, the City assigned them to the Parks Department, and the Green Thumb Program helped ensure that they became a neighborhood asset. For over three decades the garden has served as a community center, a place for people to strengthen neighborhood bonds, and for youth to acquire new skills.

This acquisition is necessary to ensure that the Frank White Memorial Garden continues to serve the Hamilton Heights community. My office along with Councilmember Levine allocated capital dollars for this project because we believe in its purpose and its viability as a long-term

asset. Brotherhood Sister Sol's mandate to support, guide, and educate have extended to their stewardship of the garden. They along with the rest of the garden members have done a great job making the garden a truly wonderful space. I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to be a part of this project, and I wholeheartedly believe in and support it.

BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION

Therefore, the Manhattan Borough President Recommends approval of ULURP application No. C 180404 PCM.



Gale A. Brewer
Manhattan Borough President