



Fort Independence Park Neighborhood Association

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Supportive housing for homeless too big and wrong for this neighborhood

Urban Pathways, Inc. (<http://www.urbanpathways.org>.) appeared before Bronx Community Board 8's Land Use Committee at Kingsbridge Heights Community Center on Wednesday, December 9th. They are seeking a letter of recommendation from the Community Board to construct a 90-unit building on the vacant lot at 3469 Cannon Place (aka 3461 Cannon Place, or aka 3482 Fort Independence Street, on Block 3258 Lot 120). This lot, originally addressed on Fort Independence Street, is just north of Cannon Heights (3400 Fort Independence Street). The lot is a steep, rocky cliff with a 50' difference between Cannon Place (a narrow, one-way street) and Fort Independence, the busier street below. Since more residents came to the meeting than the room could hold, a follow-up meeting is scheduled for February. Community residents are gearing up and developing lists of concerns.

While Urban Pathways may have a good program, the scale of this facility at this site is totally inappropriate and unacceptable – it is too big and in the wrong place. The huge project they are proposing will leave a disastrous footprint on our landscape. This densely populated neighborhood has its fair share of facilities. It is a diversified mix of single family homes, large housing complexes, and small apartment buildings; major social, health and educational institutions; and a large regional water system facility – the Jerome Park Reservoir.

A facility of 8-10 residents is the most that this neighborhood can support as there is

- Kingsbridge Heights Rehabilitation and Care Center, a 400-bed nursing home (the size of a large hospital in NYS) located within ½ block on the same narrow curved street,
- Fort Independence Houses, a 21-story, 342-unit low-income housing authority project 2 blocks away¹
- the new 72-unit Jericho Project, another 60-40 mixed use near Kingsbridge Road, partnering with the Veterans Administration Hospital² -- less than a mile from the site,
- new supportive housing facility ¼ mile away at 3882 Orloff Ave.
- other low income housing, either in place or under construction

Rather than increase funding for Section 8 vouchers to stop homelessness, once again, city hall chooses not solve a problem, but engage developers. The large amount of taxpayer money required to purchase this property and construct the planned facility on a virtually unbuildable site should be used in a much more productive manner -- at a smaller, more suitable, easier to build site. Social problems, such as homelessness, can not be solved by segregation; but instead by integration, mainstreaming and increase social service funding.

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¹ The New York City Housing Authority . <http://bit.ly/5EwH2G>

² Jericho Veterans Supportive Apartment Program has partnered with the James J. Peters Bronx VA Medical Center to launch Jericho's Veterans Supportive Apartment Program to fast track veterans and their families to affordable, furnished apartments. Jericho will also help them land jobs and build skills through its successful Vocational and Education program, as well as relapse prevention, family counseling, and crisis management. This program will eliminate the often overwhelming challenges that many veterans face in trying to locate, fund and apply for affordable housing within the 120 days that they have to use their HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) vouchers.Both the Supportive Apartment Program and Jericho's two new Veterans Residences will use Jericho's proven model for helping formerly homeless individuals transform their lives and achieve their greatest potential: supportive housing to provide a secure foundation; comprehensive counseling to prepare the individual for success, and aftercare to ensure ongoing support for at least two years. (<http://bit.ly/8ecvVV>)