

Position Statement on the Proposed Urban Pathways Supportive Housing Project at 3469 Cannon Place a.k.a. 3482 Fort Independence Street

**Submitted by the Fort Independence Park Neighborhood Association, Cannon Place
Neighbors, Sholom Aleichem Houses, Park Reservoir, Amalgamated Houses,
75 West 238 Street and numerous local residents.**

This statement is submitted in response to the stated intent of Urban Pathways, Inc. to construct a 90 unit building at 3469 Cannon Place in the Bronx. It is Urban Pathways goal to apportion 56 units as supportive housing to provide social treatment to homeless individuals with a history of substance abuse and/or mental illness. The remaining 34 units are slated to be used as affordable housing for individuals making less than \$36,000 per year.

The scale of this project is too big for our community!

The proposed 90 unit building is inappropriate for this neighborhood. It is a generally accepted principle that Supportive Housing works when it blends into the community and renders itself invisible. Urban Pathways has presented its facility known as The Ivan Shapiro House on West 46th Street in Manhattan as a model for this project. However, their building in Manhattan is 55 units and located in Times Square - an area filled with skyscrapers, bright lights and where an individual can walk around as a naked cowboy and blend into the area. That is a much different environment than our community.

Our objections to the Urban Pathways project are summarized as follows:

1. Inappropriate scale and type of project: A 90 unit building on the Cannon Place site will not only stand out but will leave a disastrous footprint on our landscape. Our historic neighborhood is a diversified mix of single family homes, small apartment houses, large housing complexes and major social, health and educational institutions. In addition, there is a regional water system facility (the Jerome Park Reservoir) in which a runner's track is planned to be built. The project that Urban Pathways proposes to construct will result in an approximately 60,000 square feet apartment building at the top of a cliff. It will loom over a narrow one-way street, cutting off light and air for the residents of Cannon Place. In addition, it will tower approximately 14 stories above Fort Independence Street, thereby restricting air and light to the surrounding area. It creates transient housing in an area in which many families have remained for decades. While a small amount of supportive housing units may be absorbed, 56 studio units of supportive housing coupled with 34 studio or one bedroom apartments is inappropriate for the family oriented housing in this community. A large building with a constantly transient population will have an adverse affect on the stability of this neighborhood.

2. Saturation: This neighborhood has more than its' fair share of social service and community facilities. This project proposed by Urban Pathways will further drain on the already over-burdened mental health resources of our community which Urban Pathways' residents will need to access. Some of the facilities in our area include, but are not limited to:

- a. Kingsbridge Heights Rehabilitation and Care Center, a 400 bed nursing home (equivalent in size to a large NYS hospital), which is less than 250 feet from the proposed facility, on the same narrow street.
- b. Ft. Independence Houses, a 21 story, 342 unit low-income housing project 2 blocks away.
- c. The Jericho Project, a 72 unit mixed use facility for veterans less than 1 mile from the proposed facility
- d. A supportive housing facility at 3882 Cannon Place, 1/4 mile away
- e. Bailey Houses, another large low-income project in close proximity
- f. A group home at 3356 Ft. Independence Street, 2 blocks from the proposed facility.

3. **Questionable use of public funds:** Rather than increase funding for new Section 8 vouchers (N.B. due to lack of funds, no new vouchers will be issued by NYC as of Jan. 1,2010), to stop homelessness, City Hall chooses to engage and enrich developers. The large amount of tax-payer money required to purchase and construct this facility on a very difficult site must be used in a much more productive manner. Financial questions that must be answered include:

- a. How much taxpayer money will be used to purchase this property?
- b. How much taxpayer money will be initially allocated for construction?
- c. How much more money will be needed for inevitable cost over-runs?

4. **Construction problems for the community:** The proposed construction will have an extremely negative impact on the community for much longer than 18 months, due to the difficulties of the site. This is a narrow street that, of necessity, will be used as a construction staging site as the extreme slope of the site makes it impossible for equipment to be kept on the site. There will be a crane on Cannon Place and waiting dump trucks, concrete trucks front-loaders and bull-dozers will effectively close down the street for the construction day, as well as polluting the air by constantly running. Sidewalks will be run over and cracked and water and sewer lines damaged, as has occurred in the past. Giles Place and Cannon Place have a delicate infrastructure and the retaining wall that holds up Cannon Place collapsed in 1979. When Cannon Place is blocked vehicles will be forced to go the wrong way on a one-way street to exit and access the area. This will particularly affect the numerous emergency vehicles that use Cannon Place from the Kingsbridge Heights Rehabilitation and Care Center.

5. **Inexperience of Urban Pathways in running this type of facility:** Urban Pathways runs ONE supportive housing facility at this time, and will be expanding from 55 to 377 units of supportive housing in a very short period of time. They have no experience running a mixed use facility, which are inherently less secure and have fewer restrictions. We doubt their ability to expand in a way as to properly vet clients and run all their new facilities in a safe way. Their proposal to staff the facility with social services personnel Monday through Friday and a single security guard the rest of the time demonstrates their lack of experience and preparation to properly and safely run the proposed facility.

In conclusion, we emphasize: **The scale of this project is too big for this community!**

Please vote against this project. Thank you for your kind attention to this matter.