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New development expected in Melrose Commons

By Steven Goodstein

A new development is being planned for the rapidly developing Melrose Commons.

A 361,600 square foot proposed project, expected to break ground on an 81,000 plus square foot vacant parcel on Elton Avenue between East 162nd and East 163rd streets, will be a mixed-use development that will include 12 stories at its highest point and provide housing for families and musicians.

The building's ground floor will be an 18,000 square foot community space that will include the permanent home of the Bronx Music Heritage Center as well as 25,000 square feet of commercial retail space.

Although the buildings developers, Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation and Blue Sea Development Corporation, are still in the process of inking retailers, they have hinted that they are looking for tenants such as bookstores, cafes and restaurants to occupy the space.

The remainder of the building will include 270 rental apartments at affordable rate, with 50% to 80% AMI, or Area Median Income, and approximately 75% of the units will have two or more bedrooms.

Forty units will be reserved for elder musicians from the Bronx Music Heritage Center, an art organization founded by WHEDco that has continued to show its support of the local artists, especially with this upcoming project.

"We are delighted to finally be close to this development breaking ground and becoming an anchor for the community," said Nancy Biberman, president of WHEDco. "Amidst the development's serious planning, however, this project has seen delays in the last few years, but we are happy to move forward with this process.

The overall structure of the development will create a dynamic skyline for the commons as well. Although the building will be 12 stories high in its tallest portion, the other sections of the building will reach their peak at nine and six stories. One of these rooftops will include a hydroponic green house and green space, welcoming recreation.

This project will not be the first time that WHEDco has given back to the Melrose community.

For the past 25 years, WHEDco has developed affordable housing and started after-school programs for a dozen Bronx schools, as well as trained women to be child care providers.

They have also been instrumental in guiding the Bronx Music Heritage Center since its founding in the mid 2000s, helping them gain status by holding community meetings and setting up their advisory board.

"We look forward to welcoming the Bronx Music Heritage Center to their new home," said Nancy Biberman, president of WHEDco.

“This group is filled with very talented artists who attract the community’s residents through music, dancing, film, spoken word and more, and we are very proud that this development will be providing them with their future location.”

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