



**THE CITY OF NEW YORK
BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD 6**

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Honorable Vanessa L. Gibson, Bronx Borough President

Honorable Oswald Feliz, New York City Council Member, 15th District

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Board Chairperson

MR. RAFAEL MOURE-PUNNETT
District Manager

May 27, 2026

The Honorable Oswald Feliz
New York City Council Member
District 15, The Bronx

The Honorable Vanessa Gibson
Borough President
The Bronx

Bronx Community Board 6 has been notified of a ULURP application from Phipps Houses for the Sojourner Truth - Mapes project (ULURP 240206ZMX; N240207ZRX). The Board opposes this rezoning.

The Board would like to express concern about the transfer of the residents in 2158 Mapes Avenue and 2159 Southern Boulevard, both owned by Phipps Houses, to the new proposed building, identified in this project as “Sojourner Truth” (Site 2). When conducting a rezoning for the Lambert Houses in 2016, Phipps Houses CEO Adam Weinstein made several unfulfilled promises in regard to tenant transfers between existing and newly constructed buildings. The Lambert rezoning similarly required tenants to move from old buildings in poor condition to new buildings resulting from a rezoning. In 2024, after new buildings had been constructed, Lambert tenants came to the Community Board to complain about the lack of information provided regarding transfers.

Adam Weinstein, when addressing the NYC Council Land Use committee for the Lambert rezoning (10/19/16), promised to identify staff specifically to inform tenants about transfers, to set up a website about the transfers, and to hold public meetings to inform tenants about the transfers. It appears that few of Mr. Weinstein’s commitments at the NYC Council Land Use Committee were upheld, despite the Community Board’s follow up on those commitments in [letters](#) to Phipps Houses in 2024. Phipps Houses refused to hold public meetings to explain the transfer process, instead only holding one-on-one conversations with tenants. No website was set up, and we are not aware of any staff specifically assigned to transfer tenants. In fact, there was not even a management office open in Lambert Houses when the transfers from old to new building began. This raises concerns about Phipps’ ability to transfer tenants out of the Mapes Avenue and Southern Boulevard buildings and properly certify them for eligibility in the “Sojourner Truth” building, which will likely receive tax credits and require tenants to recertify their income each year.

To quote Mr. Weinstein from the 2016 Council Land Use hearing:

“I’ve been showing up at Community Board meetings... we showed up to talk about a new development we were doing. All I got were complaints about Lambert Houses. And why not? Lambert Houses was designed wrong, conceived wrong, financed wrong, tenanted wrong, built wrong, plumbed wrong, secured wrong, but other than that it is a perfect project.”

If Mr. Weinstein believes the buildings Phipps currently owns are financed wrong (by creating project-based Section 8 housing, affordable housing for low-income people) and tenanted wrong (36% black and 69% Hispanic), then why should the City of New York provide Phipps Houses with an additional density in new proposed buildings with similar tenant demographics? The Community Board, when presenting at the 2016 Land Use Committee, stated that the vote for the Lambert rezoning would have failed at the Board if they had been properly informed of the lack of enforcement of the negotiated community benefits (the chief concern being a new school).

There are still ongoing issues in Lambert Houses, including Phipps Houses' inability to recertify tenants in a timely manner. Phipps hired a third-party entity to do the recertifications after Community Board 6 began organizing around this issue and Phipps was sued in a class action case in federal court. Tenants report continued failure to complete recertifications in a timely manner, and Phipps Houses estimates that only 60% of tenants are up to date on their recertifications. This lack of recertification leads to rents that are not properly adjusted to tenant income, causing Phipps to reportedly overcharge tenants and file eviction cases in housing court based on these overcharges. The New York Legal Assistance Group filed a federal class action case against Phipps Houses for this alleged systematic noncompliance with fair debt collection law (*Prince v. Jason Boroff*).

Community Board 6 would like to highlight conditions at 2158 Mapes Avenue, a 46 unit building with 61 open housing code violations, owned by Phipps Houses and located in the proposed rezoning area. These violations include the open C (immediately hazardous) code violations on closing doors in public hallways – the exact conditions that have cost Bronx residents their lives in building fires. Tenants have filed Housing Part repair actions in housing court against Phipps Houses in both 2158 Mapes Avenue and the adjacent 2159 Southern Boulevard.

Bronx Community Board 6 would like to call into question the need for a rezoning at this location in particular. Without a rezoning, the “Sojourner Truth” Site (2) can be developed into an eight story, 81-unit building. The “Sojourner Truth” building, at 8 stories, would still be taller than the immediately surrounding buildings. Our community is in need of affordable housing, and that housing is currently being built as two story homes and vacant lots are being bought and redeveloped into as-of-right apartment buildings in Belmont, East Tremont, and Crotona. Nearly all of Community Board 6 is currently built out to a density/height much lower than the as-of-right density allows. In fact, the proposed rezoning area includes two vacant lots that can be constructed without a change in zoning, at an R7 density. Community District 6's number of housing units increased 10.5% from 2010 to 2020, faster than the city's growth in population 7.7%, mostly through as-of-right development.

We ask that your office consider rejecting ULURP actions that do not include cooperatively owned housing in Community District 6. Our Community Board has adopted [guidelines](#) for responsible new development in our district, which lists as its first priority the development of resident ownership. When the “Sojourner Truth” building was first presented to the Community Board in October 2025, the Board's Housing & Land Use committee recommended that some units be sold as condos, in particular the first-floor duplex units with private entrances. The final proposed building does not include any resident-owned units.

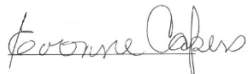
Additional concerns raised by the Housing and Land Use committee of the Board include concerns about the community facility proposed in the zoning change, which will require a community-facing facility. The zoning text is vague in its requirement, and it appears that Phipps Houses has not made any

determination in what kind of commercial tenant will use this space. Considering the lengths the City Council and Community Board went to negotiate a school in the Lambert Houses rezoning, which never materialized due to a drop in school enrollment, we are concerned about the lack of enforceable specificity in the community facility part of this project. The committee also raised concerns about increased pedestrian traffic at the Bronx Zoo.

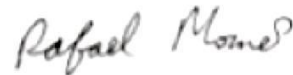
The Community Board has been in contact with the Hornaday Community Garden, which is across the street from the proposed "Sojourner Truth" building. The [garden will lose](#) much of its already limited direct sunlight as a result of the proposed building. The garden is not yet in communication with Phipps Houses and has not heard what might be possible to address this loss of direct sunlight.

Based on the concerns about Phipps' previous history before the Council Land Use Committee, management practices, and ability to construct new housing as of right, Community Board 6 asks that you vote no on the Sojourner Truth - Mapes rezoning (ULURP 240206ZMX; N240207ZRX).

Regards,



Evonne Capers
Chair
Bronx Community Board 6



Rafael Moure-Punnett
District Manager
Bronx Community Board 6

CC:

The Honorable Zohran K. Mamdani
Mayor
City of New York

The Honorable Julie Menin
Speaker
New York City Council

The Honorable Kevin Riley
Chair, Committee on Land Use
New York City Council