



NYS HFA issues RFP for sale of Howard Park Unit

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The New York State Housing Finance Agency (HFA) has issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for developers interested in purchasing the site of the Howard Park Unit in the Howard Beach neighborhood for the development of 100 affordable housing units for low-income senior citizens. The proposed sale is part of governor David Paterson's response to the state's affordable housing crisis by making state properties no longer needed for state operations available for development. The current structures on the property, which will require substantial rehabilitation and modernization, are operated by the Office of Mental Retardation & Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD) and are scheduled to close by June 30.

The development site consists of 3.4 acres located at 155-55 Cross Bay Blvd. The two structures on the property occupy 111,000 s/f. The site is currently owned by the Dormitory Authority of NYS.

"My administration is dedicated to converting nonessential state property to private use and it makes tremendous sense to turn Howard Park into affordable senior housing," the governor said. "In these difficult fiscal times, we need to be as creative as possible in generating additional resources and providing affordable housing for our neediest citizens."

State senator Joe Addabbo (D-Queens) said, "I look forward to working with governor Paterson's administration and state officials on the future of the Bernard Fineson facility site. I intend to promote community involvement and input on all aspects of planning and discussions on the proposed use of said site."

Assemblywoman Audrey Pheffer (D-Queens) said, "During these fiscally troubling times, senior citizens are especially vulnerable. The creation of quality, affordable senior citizen apartments will provide a currently unmet need in our community. I look forward to working with DHCR and HFA, the prospective developer and the community in welcoming this much needed senior housing."

Priscilla Almodovar, HFA president and CEO, said, "With this proposal, the State takes the first step toward converting underutilized public property into much needed affordable housing for senior citizens and those who are developmentally disabled living in Queens. This proposal could not have happened without multiple state agencies and our partners working together."

OMRDD commissioner Diana Jones Ritter said, "OMRDD is committed to downsizing and redefining its institutional capacity. The sale and redevelopment of the property is part and parcel of this. The individuals living at Howard Park will be transferred into the community and into a home of their choice. We are looking forward to seeing people who have developmental disabilities, and who are aging, take advantage of the much-needed senior housing that will come from this."

Deborah VanAmerongen, commissioner of DHCR, said, "governor Paterson's plan to use non-essential and underutilized state properties for the public good is a common sense approach that will help us address the state's affordable housing shortage. The conversion of Howard Park Unit will provide housing for New Yorkers who most need our help-low-income elderly and people

with developmental disabilities."

Paul Williams Jr., executive director of the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York, said, "Affordable housing is a critical need across New York State, particularly in New York City. The Dormitory Authority is proud to assist governor Paterson, the state HFA and private sector developers in transforming this underused state property into 100 units of affordable housing that will benefit senior citizens in New York City. This project is a fine example of state government and the private sector working together to achieve a laudable public policy goal."

Bernie Carr, executive director of the NYS Association for Affordable Housing, said, "The NYS Association for Affordable Housing applauds the governor's decision to transform this underutilized property into much-needed affordable housing for seniors. The adaptive re-use of existing facilities is an excellent use of scarce government subsidy. It will also leverage substantial private investment. Our members look forward to working with our partners at HFA and OMRDD to make this project a reality."

Ted Houghton, executive director of the Supportive Housing Network of New York, said, "This is exactly the kind of creative thinking that's becoming a hallmark of the Paterson Administration. Re-using surplus state properties in this way shows the governor is not going to let the budget deficit get in the way of his commitment to building affordable housing. We're especially pleased that people with special needs will be integrated into the housing. That this integration will occur on the site of an institution that used to separate disabled people from their communities is particularly welcome."

The state would like the successful developer to convert the facility into 100 housing units. At least 80 of the units would be studios or one-bedroom apartments for low- to moderate-income seniors over the age of 60. The remaining 20 units would be reserved for individuals supported by OMRDD. The developer should also set aside space for appropriate senior services for residents of the unsupported units, such as a community or informational resource center.

The site will likely be eligible for allocations of public financing, though applicants should assume that no more than 70% of the total redevelopment cost will come from State agencies. Bidders are required to submit funding plans that are financially feasible, demonstrate interest from funding sources other than the State, provide long-term affordability for low-income residents, and serve the lowest-income persons as possible with the least amount of state subsidy.

Howard Park was originally constructed as a private hospital in the 1960's. OMRDD opened the facility as a residential unit in 1975. The certified capacity at that time was 160. The facility currently provides residential and program services for 46 individuals, including those diagnosed with autism. When the facility closes in June, these individuals will be placed into community placement opportunities or be transferred to the main Hillside Campus in Queens Village, where they will continue to receive services designed to promote their health and welfare.