

**We oppose permitting Phipps Houses to build north of Barnett Avenue between 50th and 52nd Streets, for reasons including these:**

\* The site is not zoned for residential use. It is M-1 (manufacturing) because it is a noxious location abutting the very active Amtrak and Long Island Rail Road lines that were recently expanded to carry 50% greater capacity. Buildings a block away suffer cracks from railroad vibrations, and the air and noise pollution make the site unfit for housing of any kind, especially for hundreds of units.

Surely our expectations for affordable housing, and our regard for those who could afford to live in it, are not so low as this.

\* Barnett Avenue is not configured to handle so much density. It is a disjointed, partially one-way street lacking sidewalks and parking on both sides for several blocks—half its length, including the proposed site. This street is a decades-long scandal that DOT must engineer to provide a proper two-way thoroughfare that is a viable and preferred alternative to 39th Avenue, which has become increasingly overburdened and unsafe. As it is, access to the site is so restricted as to compel all traffic from the south and west to flow via 39th Avenue and 50th Street.

A full reconstruction of Barnett Avenue must be completed right away, and long before any new construction on Barnett can be considered.

\* Parking: A dire result would be competing for already very tight parking. The large Historic District's special zoning (PC) prohibits driveways, so on-street parking is already stressed. The one relief is the longstanding parking lot on this site, which accommodates at least 225 vehicles. Many current residents of Phipps and surrounding areas, some 40 employees of Steve Madden and other local businesses, and many commercial vehicles, park in the existing lot and would be displaced by a new building. The commercial vans that support the businesses along Barnett and its vicinity have nowhere else to park.

Future parking on this site needs to accommodate all these and also needs to be affordable to current users.

\* The scale of the proposed building is totally out of context. The long southern side of the site is a landmarked Historic District, zoned R4 like other blocks for some distance around. The existing Phipps building adjacent to the site is within the Historic District and the largest building in the vicinity, with a floor area ratio (FAR) of roughly 2.0. At 10 stories, the proposed building might be twice that figure and would dwarf Phipps' existing apartments, which are 4 to 6 stories. Tenants along Barnett would lose light and air, their street view obstructed by the proposed building.

The scale and FAR of any new building must be no taller nor denser than that of Phipps' existing building.

\* Materiality: This landmarked Historic District has a very cohesive and consistent palette of materials and colors—chiefly red brick. Any new building's architecture and materiality must relate to its historic context by either providing an elegant departure or being consistent with it. The yellow brick shown in the rendering is neither consistent nor a counterpoint.

\* Inadequate infrastructure to handle the influx of development in Western Queens: The entire LIC/Astoria/Sunnyside area is being developed at very high densities, and infrastructure is not keeping pace. Our trains, roads, parking, schools, police, fire, EMS, and other services are overloaded. Miles apart, Sunnyside and LIC share the same school district and same police precinct.

\* Public transportation options are inadequate, especially with the 7 train, already the most crowded line in the City, performing poorly.

\* Inadequate upper grade schools: Where will all these neighborhood kids go to middle and high school? We have a major middle school problem. How will the burdened District 30 infrastructure support all these new families?

\* In the early 20th century, Phipps Houses built its reputation as a provider of decent housing. But over the past generation, the company has ceased to be a good landlord to its Sunnyside tenants. It operates more than 470 apartments in its existing building, so why does it not make those apartments affordable? It rents new apartments at market rates. Decades ago it closed down all its pre-K services, and has sold off its children's playground. It maintains the building poorly, as its Tenants Association has documented. No wonder that the corporation has legally removed the name "Phipps" from the building.

\* In planning for future residents in this neighborhood, DCP recently completed the re-zoning of many blocks along Queens Boulevard. These are the intended and appropriate places for new affordable housing. There is no further need for zoning alterations in the low-density, contextually zoned parts of the neighborhood.