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Colonial Gardens renovation plan revised, includes slight reduction in proposed units at Kingston complex



A rendering shows a proposed four-story building containing 80 one-bedroom apartments for seniors at the Colonial Gardens public housing complex at 206 Flatbush, Ave. in Kingston, N.Y. The project is set to replace the 32-studio apartments at the present Penn Court Annex site. (Brian Hubert, Daily Freeman).



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KINGSTON, N.Y. — The city’s Planning Board viewed revised plans for a proposed four-story building with one-bedroom apartments for seniors at Colonial Gardens calling for a slight reduction in units to 80.

The revised plans, submitted by the Kingston Housing Authority and its development partner Mountco at the Monday Planning Board meeting, shave off a portion of the fourth floor closest to Flatbush Avenue and a pair of neighboring homes, leaving a three-story corner on this end of the building. Himanshu Tailor, a representative with Aufghang Architects who is working on the project, noted this

effort to soften the impact of the building on the neighborhood, known as a “setback,” comes at the expense of two apartments resulting in the reduction of units to 80 from the 82 originally proposed.

The [project](#), developed by the Kingston Housing Authority and Mountco, calls for demolishing two existing buildings in the Penn Court “Annex” site at the public housing complex at 206 Flatbush Ave. The existing buildings that would be demolished have 32 studio apartments. Mountco has said that 98 existing units of one, two and three bedrooms at Colonial Gardens will also be rehabilitated as part of the project.

City Planner Sue Cahill also suggested they soften this facade by adding windows. Tailor said they could show renderings with that at January’s meeting.

Mountco’s Executive Vice President of Development and General Counsel John Madeo said the revised plans also lowered the building by 2.5 feet, reducing the perceived height to neighbors. He added that the developers studied going lower, but they ran into problems with a utility easement.

They also presented renderings with landscaping, including evergreen trees and flowers to help screen the project from those traveling down the hill on Flatbush Avenue towards the building and those who live in neighboring homes.

The presentation also showed a number of landscaped “contemplative spaces” that developers hope to use to activate the space outside the building.

Board members seemed satisfied with the modifications to the building and landscape plan.

“This project is definitely moving in the right direction,” Planning Board Chair Wayne Platte Jr. said.

“The landscaping and stepped-back facade made a huge difference,” Board member Robert Jacobsen added. Jacobsen had presented numerous concerns about the project’s scale and requests for multiple major waivers at November’s meeting.

Board member Kaira Grundig also praised the landscaping proposed.

The board and Mountco and Kingston Housing Authority representatives also discussed what would happen if the fourth floor was shaved off altogether on the Flatbush Avenue side of the building. Tailor cautioned that this would reduce the number of units to 72.

Kingston Housing Authority Executive Director Harolda Wilcox emphasized that the authority wants to get as many units at the housing complex as possible. “The reduction from 82-72 is significant,” Wilcox said.

The board also questioned what would happen if the building was reduced to three floors.

Wilcox noted this would reduce the number of units to 60.

Wilcox emphasized she knows of many seniors living in their cars who are in desperate need of housing options like this project will offer.

Madeo said that larger reductions in the number of units could make the financial situation tighter too, but he stopped short of saying it would derail the project altogether.

A reduced number of units would not result in higher rents for tenants, he said.

He also warned the board that the state is prioritizing working with Housing Authorities where municipal leaders are cooperative with these types of projects. A drawn-out planning process could see other municipalities get in line ahead of Kingston, he added.

“This board does not want to hold up this project,” Platte said in response.

Madeo said they expect to have requested traffic study by January’s meeting.

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