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Extell clears Council hurdle for UWS high-rises

Two City Council committees agreed to back Extell Development Co.'s proposed 3.1 million-square-foot mixed-use project Wednesday.

By Theresa Agovino

Extell Development Co.'s proposed 3.1 million-square-foot mixed-use project on the Upper West Side received unanimous thumbs up from two City Council committees on Wednesday, signaling it will be approved by the full Council later this month.

Affirmation from the Committee on Land Use and the Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises came after the developer agreed to build a bigger school than originally offered, as well as at least 220 units of affordable housing on the eight-acre parcel, which spans from West 59th Street to West 61st Street, between West End Avenue and the West Side Highway. It is the last major undeveloped parcel on the Upper West Side.

“We are happy with the deal,” said City Councilwoman Gale Brewer, who represents the neighborhood. “We always want more, but Extell negotiated in good faith.”

Typically, the Council takes its voting cues on development issues from the member who represents the district where the project is located. The project includes 2,500 apartments in five high-rise towers, retail space and a school.

Extell had pledged to build a 75,000-square-foot school but the community wanted to double the size of the facility. Now, Extell has promised to build a 100,000-square-foot school, Ms. Brewer said.

The councilwoman had also wanted Extell to pledge 20% to 30% of the units on site as affordable housing. Under the deal, the developer will build 500 units of affordable housing, or 20% of the total, but only 9% of them will definitely be on site, she said. The rest will either be on site or at another location.

Extell President Gary Barnett couldn't be reached for comment.