

<http://rockawaytimes.com/index.php/columns/4773-special-editorial-the-future-of-the-peninsula-hospital-site>

# Special Editorial: The Future of the Peninsula Hospital Site

BY GLENN DIRESTO

24 JANUARY 2019

NEWS

On Tuesday, January 22, a visioning meeting was held regarding the plan for the future of the Peninsula Hospital site, which calls a massive amount of residential units. Glenn DiResto shares his thoughts:

The City Planning Commission is considering rezoning and text changes to the former Peninsula Hospital site to allow for up to 2,200 units of affordable housing on ONLY 10 acres of land. Myself, along with many local residents, are in opposition of the plan as currently proposed for the following reasons.

## Density & Building Size

We all know that a project of this scale is too much housing for this area of our small peninsula, without the resources and infrastructure to handle a large-scale development of this size that would have roughly 5,000 new residents. The density of this development will have a negative impact on the quality of life for all current AND future residents throughout the community. Let's put this proposed large-scale development into perspective, compared to other local large-scale developments, to get a better understanding.

- NYCHA Ocean Bay Houses: 1,395 units and about 4,000 residents on about 35 acres
- Arverne View Apartments: 1,093 units and about 3,500 residents on 14 acres.
- Nordac Coop Building: 342 units and about 1,000 residents on around 7.5 acres
- Beach 41st Street Houses: 712 units and about 1,800 residents
- The Arverne by the Sea Development: Also 2,200 units of housing but on 120 acres NOT 10 acres.

Currently the city is involved in the development of a couple other large-scale projects throughout the city and they are better planned out to ensure the communities do not become too densely populated or the area becomes too highly populated with only low-income residents. These are just two of the current large-scale developments and you can see it is much less populated and mixes incomes.

## Spofford Redevelopment in the Bronx

This project will include 700 units of affordable housing, ground-floor retail, light industrial manufacturing space and other amenities on five acres.

### **Hunter's Point South**

This prime waterfront property in Long Island City will have up to 5,000 housing units on 30 acres of which only 60 percent will be affordable to low/moderate income.

As you can see, compared to the current housing in the Arverne/ Edgemere area mentioned above and the other proposed housing in other areas of the city, this large-scale development proposed on the Peninsula Hospital Site would be much more densely populated. Additionally, the size and heights (15 stories) of the proposed buildings are out of character with the beach community and overall neighborhood.

### **Affordable Housing**

We all know rents have jumped throughout the city and there is no doubt a need for affordable housing. However, the Rockaways has always bore the brunt of affordable housing and to make this large-scale development 100 percent affordable housing is NOT the answer. Has the city not learned from past failures that it is very important to have a large range of a mixed-income, affordable and market-rate housing to balance out incomes and ensure the neighborhood becomes viable to live, work and play?

According to a report by the New York City Planning Commission from November 3, 2003/Calendar No. 2 C 030509 HUQ, half of the subsidized housing in Queens was located on the Rockaway Peninsula, and construction of additional low and moderate-income housing in Arverne would only increase the proportion.

An additional report put out on April 2016 by the Mayor's office of Environmental Remediation, the following facts apply to the Rockaways.

- Edgemere, Arverne, and Hammels are now home to a fairly dense community with a high proportion of low-income residents.
- At 16 percent, the unemployment rate of the Hammels-Arverne-Edgemere NTA is more than five percent higher than the rest of the peninsula, Queens (9.6 percent) and New York City (10.2 percent).
- Approximately 30 percent of residents in the Hammels-Arverne-Edgemere are living in poverty. This represents a much greater share of residents living in poverty than the rest of the peninsula and New York City (20 percent).
- The median household income of residents of the Hammels-Arverne-Edgemere NTA is \$39,373. This is significantly less than the median incomes of residents of the Rockaway Peninsula (\$48,171), Queens (\$56,780) and New York City as a whole (\$51,865).

According to the city's own studies and facts, this section of the Rockaways, where this large-scale development is planned, is already one of the poorest in the city, and to continue to bring more lower income families to an isolated peninsula, which lacks the infrastructure and services is NOT the answer. There is a need for mixed housing with higher AMI amounts to ensure residents have safe affordable places to live, as well as

residents with disposable income to support the retail that is planned as part of the development.

### **Environmental Study**

The proposed large-scale development is on the old Peninsula Hospital site. This site was part of the surrounding area of the original Arverne/Edgemere Urban Renewal Plan. During the original Arverne Urban Renewal Area Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) the site was a medical facility and provided medical care for the existing residents of the Rockaways, in addition to all the new residents what would be moving to the Rockaways with the development of the Arverne Urban Renewal Area, (Arverne by the Sea & Arverne East). Now that the hospital is closed, which was part of the original Arverne Urban Renewal EIS, and the current proposed plan to build 2,200 units of housing was NOT part of the original EIS, the current DRAFT Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) will not comply with the original EIS. These areas must be studied together to fully understand the impact it would have on the community. You cannot separately study the Peninsula Hospital Site and separate it from the remaining Arverne East area that is to be developed. It needs to be studied together to get a true understanding of the impact 2,200 units of affordable housing would have on the surrounding neighborhood. Not studying the areas together is a clear segmentation and any analysis would be flawed.

The Peninsula Hospital site is also in close proximity to NYC beaches that are NOT open to the public due to endangered species that use the shoreline for nesting purposes. The Peninsula Hospital site should be studied together with Arverne East to see how a large-scale development of this size, which is 100 percent affordable would have on the community.

Look at the potential for significant impacts to social and economic conditions, significant impacts to community facilities and services, significant changes to neighborhood character, the potential for open spaces and recreational facilities to be significantly impacted, shadow impacts, the potential for significant changes to natural resources, changes related to shoreline erosion and sea level, impacts to waterfront revitalization, adverse impacts from hazardous materials, changes to traffic and transportation, adverse effects to air quality and significant noise impacts.

The success and future of the Rockaways is at stake and we must ensure that this project is carefully thought out, planned and developed with significant community input to ensure the community stays vibrant. As residents of the community we oppose the current plan.