



Sustainable South Bronx's eco-industrial park plan is in line with the city's long-term economic goals

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The city of New York is aggressively pursuing new jail construction on the 25 acre Oak Point site in the South Bronx. The Bloomberg administration could use this moment as a leadership example for the world to see-not to build another jail, but to demonstrate how environmental, economic, community, city, regional, and global interests can be served in a single project that will inspire many more to come.

Given the often trumpeted drop in N.Y.C. crime rates; the high recidivism rates attributed, in part, by various studies to lack of jobs in communities where former prisoners return; the Oak Point vicinity's local concentration of diesel truck dependent and energy intensive industries; the relatively low number of living wage jobs in the area; the unique inter-modal (barge and rail) transportation potential of the site; and New York's increasingly smaller share of the growing "clean-tech" industrial sector which the Partnership for NY rightly brought to the city's attention last year, this administration ought to stop pursuing the proposed jail at Oak Point, and put its considerable efforts into pursuing the kind of comprehensive environmental and economic plans proposed in, but not limited to, the Eco-Industrial Park plan put forward by Sustainable South Bronx.

This concept creates living wage jobs, cleans the air by reducing truck traffic and using alternative energy sources, provides a clean, productive space for a value-added process applied to the regional waste stream, fully incorporates the recently funded South Bronx Greenway plan, and can serve as an example of how multiple interests can be served simultaneously-all in line with the city's stated goal of creating a long term sustainable economy.

In contrast, a new jail at this location, will serve as a barrier to future clean-tech developments, as a signal that the city does not value inter-modal transportation potential, will not incorporate the South Bronx Greenway, and will serve as a beacon of despair for South Bronx residents who observe hundreds of millions of dollars and bureaucratic efforts to build jails, while their actual and potential economic and public health needs go unaddressed - or are even more acutely degraded.

Under the NYC Economic Development Corporation's watch, the Related Company's heavily subsidized Gateway Mall, the no-bid sale of city-owned lands to Baldor Food Corp which was struck down by the State Supreme Court, and now a 2,000 inmate jail do several things readers of this Journal should find repugnant.

This type of manipulation takes an incalculable toll on the real-estate industry for those who are not as well connected to that office. That's bad news for all the honest brokers out there who are making it without government handouts because it skews large amounts of money in ways that the market would not normally support. It's like real-estate on steroids: looks good in the short term, but ultimately unsustainable.

New developments led by an impressive array of grass roots community leaders, private interests,

and some visionary government leaders are improving the quality of life for South Bronx residents and they are coming on line all around us now and in the years to come. They include cleaner waterways, more trees, more parks, more responsible handling of solid waste, better transportation options, and most of all, hope.

That spirit of hope is what propels people to do more than what is expected of them. When we create real broad-based economic development, people can get good jobs, stay out of the criminal justice system - and help keep others in their communities out of that system as well. It's a recipe for prosperity, and when we allow market forces to work in this environment, a much more robust and egalitarian landscape for everything from restaurants to real estate will emerge.

But by entrenching the notion that the South Bronx is where bad things either go or come from, we thwart hope on the ground. Moreover, it feeds a machine that puts stadiums, arenas, and jails at the top of the list, when we know that very few New Yorkers who live here, do business here, and give this city its real value want these or benefit from them.

Help make the South Bronx a tribute to hope and victory, and not a monument to our collective failures. Let's build up the people, the market, and the spirit of the Bronx in ways we can be proud of.

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