

**Queens Civic Congress  
Testimony  
to the  
City Council  
[Economic Development Committee,  
Waterfront Committee and  
Transportation Committee]  
on the  
NYC2012 Olympics Proposal**

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City Hall

presented by  
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The Queens Civic Congress, a borough-wide coalition of more than one hundred neighborhood and community based civic organizations representing tenants, homeowners, condo and co-op owners living in every part of the borough, appreciates this opportunity to address the Council on the concerns New Yorkers have over the impacts of the Olympics on economic development and the waterfront.

We congratulate NYC 2012 on bringing the Olympics so close to home. A New York City Olympiad could be an enormously exciting event for millions of sports fans and for New Yorkers. NYC2012's accomplishment is hugely impressive. Much needs to be done and the Congress looks forward to being of some assistance to the 2012 committee.

That said, we have major concerns over the impacts the games could have on Queens, for which NYC2012 has proposed more venues than for any other borough. These Games could fairly be described as the Queens Olympics.

Our greatest concern is Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, Queens' biggest and most popular park.

We support NYC2012's proposal to use the US Tennis Center for the tennis competitions and we are supportive of using the Shea site for larger events.

We question whether closing much of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park to the public for two or more years; permanently displacing public facilities (paid for by NYC taxpayers); permanently merging the city's largest fresh water lakes into one huge water body; displacing the 40 plus acre State protected Willow Lake wetland; and replacing the Jewel Avenue overpass with a multi-million dollar bridge (to be paid for by the taxpayers) might be too high a price to pay for a seventeen day extravaganza. Other, more suitable, sites exist in the New York metropolitan area for rowing and canoeing competitions.

As worrisome, is what happens to the park after the Olympics are over and the fans and promoters go home? Is transforming a large part of the park into a privately operated rowing regatta and white water rafting center an appropriate use of one of New York City's major parks? How will the Parks Department care for six boathouses when it has been unable to look after the one built for the 1939 Worlds Fair? How will a chronically underfunded Parks Department maintain the dredged lake? How will the city restore the playgrounds, ball fields and other public facilities displaced by the Olympics? What will happen to the "improved" wetlands?

NYC2012 has a detailed plan for Olympic venues in the park but none for the traffic and security impacts on the surrounding low-density residential communities beyond its faith in the New York City Police Department.

The lakes, which empty into the East River, are part of the city's waterfront and no place in NYC2012's bid is there any plan to mitigate the effects of merging the lakes. Nor is there any mention of safely disposing of the material dredged from the lakes--which the promoters contend is toxic.

We are mindful that the effects of NYC 2012's plan could displace new immigrants and residents of under-served nearby neighborhoods from Flushing Meadows Corona Park. Residents of these communities depend on the park for recreation and cultural activities.

NYC2012 promises huge economic benefits to the City, but we have yet to hear of the benefits the Olympics would afford the central Queens neighborhoods most affected by the games: Corona, Forest Hills, Flushing and Kew Gardens Hills. Aside from the construction jobs and low-paying jobs directly associated with the events, we have heard nothing. In fact, there appear to be no economic benefits for those living closest to the park, only hardships.

Unfortunately, the long record of developers and dreamers bringing projects to our borough without providing for the rainy days that follow blue skies worries Queens residents. We wonder if once again the promoters will pack up their bags on the day after the Olympics concludes and go home to Manhattan leaving Queens to pay the piper.

With the strong and meaningful concerns raised by community advocates around the city, it makes sense to recognize that the City, which deserves a chance to host the 2012 games, offers alternatives that will make the 2012 committee's plan more attractive and provide for intelligently planned and complimentary infrastructure enhancements for the entire city in the new millennium.