

July 15, 2002

Steve Blank, Editor/Publisher  
Times/Ledger  
41-02 Bell Boulevard  
Bayside, NY 11361

Dear Steve,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your editorial criticizing the Queens Civic Congress, a borough wide coalition of more than 100 neighborhood-based civic and community groups, for standing up to special interests who insist on taking irreplaceable public parkland, heavily used by people who lack backyards for a 17-day extravaganza. It makes little sense to compare Flushing Meadows Corona Park with Udalls Cove, and for that matter much of the forested areas of Cunningham or Alley Pond Parks where I spent much time exploring the natural areas during my youth and still return to with my own children.

True - after objections by the Queens Civic Congress and our past and present borough presidents, NYC2012 adjusted its proposal for Flushing Meadows-Corona Park to extend some protections to the ecology of the lakes. We applaud that response, but satisfying those concerned with preserving the wetlands offers nothing to the thousands of New Yorkers who use the park's various ballfield, picnic and festival areas.

That's why the Congress invited the USOC to tour the park with us on June 30 and extend a similar invite today to you (Your own reporter who attended our news conference observed the heavy use of the park).

NYC2012's Olympic bid still bars full access and use for the three-year period of pre-Olympic construction and preparation to significant portions of the park, including the soccer, cricket, volley ball, softball and baseball fields, as well as areas for picnicking and family and group gatherings, including the many ethnic and other festivals. NYC2012 must adequately address these issues, as well as traffic, fiscal impacts and the long-term effects of an Olympiad on the park and nearby neighborhoods.

As my colleague QCC vice-president Patricia Dolan has stated, "We recognize how a New York City Olympiad could be an enormously exciting event for millions of sports fans and for New Yorker, but the entire project could founder on the choice of venues." That statement represents not obstructionism but constructive criticism. The reality remains a plan drafted and presented as *fait accompli* without community consultation often contains red flags. Other, more suitable, sites exist in the New York metropolitan that can appropriately accommodate the required venues.

As Queens Civic Congress Vice President Kenneth Cohen -- a member of Community School Board 25 and president of the NAACP's Northeast Queens Chapter -- said at the news conference, "We remain mindful that the effects of NYC 2012's plan will likely displace new immigrants and residents of under-served neighborhoods from Flushing Meadows Corona Park.

Residents of these communities depend on the park for recreation and cultural activities." We must not forget how NYC2012's plan disproportionately impacts new and less well to do New Yorkers.

Our city deserves to be considered as the host for the 2012 games. Thus it makes sense to offer alternatives to make the ultimate 2012 plan not only more attractive in the long run, but also allow for intelligent and complimentary infrastructure enhancements to strengthen our entire city in the new millennium.

Looking forward to touring the park together, I remain,

Sincerely,  
Corey B. Bearak  
Executive Vice President

p.s. As to Westway, I recall as a mayoral campaign aide supporting the "trade-in" for mass transit to the extent possible; ultimately NYS siphoned off much of the trade in for many projects that offered little if any NYC benefit. The issue for me was fiscal and what kind of infrastructure -- vehicular or mass transit -- to devote significant resources to.

VIEW the Queens Civic Congress Platform Online at [www.queensciviccongress.org](http://www.queensciviccongress.org)