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Bloomberg's Big Day In Rockaway

Makes Major Announcements, Breaks Ground On YMCA

By Brian Magoolaghan

Call it Mayor Bloomberg's triple-play for the revitalization of the Rockaways.

Bloomberg, joined by local elected officials, community members and many others, announced on Thursday the construction of a Super Stop & Shop at Arverne by the Sea, named the developer for the 97-acre Arverne East area and then broke ground for a YMCA facility on Beach 73 Street and Rockaway Beach Boulevard.

The two-story, 30,000 square-foot YMCA Center at Arverne by the Sea - to be built on the northwest corner of Beach 73 Street and Rockaway Beach Boulevard - will have an indoor pool, ball courts, a gymnasium, day camps and school-age child care, according to the Mayor's Office.

The Y will offer programs and services for as many as 10,000 people, including "extensive swim instruction and lifeguard training," the Mayor's Office said. Sixty-five thousand square feet of adjacent space will be left undeveloped for future expansion, and twelve to 14 months of construction is expected to begin in the spring of 2007.

The Y will eventually employ 30 full-time and 125 part-time employees.

Bloomberg, who forced the delay of the event so he could attend, appeared to take personal satisfaction in making the announcements and talking about the development of the Arverne Urban Renewal Area. He lamented Rockaway's suffering through "false starts" stretched out over decades, and said his administration is committed to seeing its projects through - not breaking ground and then turning its back.

"You've seen that out here for too long," the mayor said.

The new Super Stop & Shop - part of Arverne by the Sea's total 270,000 square feet of commercial space - will be constructed on the northeast corner of Beach 73 Street and Rockaway Beach Boulevard.

"We don't think about how important stores like this are until we don't have them," Bloomberg said.

Construction is expected to begin in the middle of 2007 and will take about 18 months.

The mayor also announced that the Bluestone Organization, L&M Equity Participants and Triangle Equities as the joint development team for Arverne East, the 97-acre site adjacent to Arverne by the Sea. The project will consist of 47-acres of housing and commercial space, a 35-acre nature preserve and a 15-acre dune preserve.



Mayor Bloomberg (at podium) makes the announcements Thursday. He is flanked by other officials from city government, the YMCA and the Arverne East developers.



Mayor Michael Bloomberg (sixth from left) and

The plans call for the construction of 1,600 middle-income units and 500,000 square feet of commercial space for retail and entertainment businesses. Eric Bluestone of the Bluestone Organization, based in Fresh Meadows, told The Wave a movie theater is in the works and that he has received letters of interest from Marriott and New York Sports Club for a hotel and convention center and a gym, respectively. Bluestone said a groundbreaking for that project would take place in 2008.

"By transforming vacant land into diverse, vibrant neighborhoods, the city is providing more quality housing and new economic opportunities for middle-income New Yorkers," said Deputy Mayor Dan Doctoroff. He said the projects represent \$1.35 billion in private investment in the Rockaways.

Rockaway's elected officials joined the mayor in celebrating the event, but City Councilman James Sander Jr. called it "a splendid day for part of the Rockaways" and said he's afraid low-income families will be "priced out of the community."

Gerard Ronski, of Arverne by the Sea, said the day was a "milestone" for the project and said he was excited to break ground on the Y and to begin selling homes at The Breakers, 133 oceanfront two-family homes.

Community Board 14 District Manager Jonathan Gaska, who said recent knee surgery wasn't enough to keep him from attending the historic ceremony. "I wouldn't miss this for the world," he said. "We've been fighting 17 years for this." Despite earlier expressing the desire for fewer housing units and a big-box retailer like Target in Arverne East, Gaska was optimistic about the plans.

"We liked [Blue Stone's] plan," he said. "They have a lot of experience and we're looking forward to working with them."

other officials broke ground Thursday for the YMCA Center at Arverne by the Sea. The mayor also made two other major announcements.



Rockaway's elected officials sat front-row as the mayor and others spoke about the new developments in the Arverne Urban Renewal Area.