

Inc. Village of Floral Park: Gerard M Bambrick – Village Administrator

Comments Regarding Belmont Park Re-Development DEIS:

Belmont Park Redevelopment Hearings: January 8, 2019

Elmont Library, Elmont NY

Host: Empire State Development Corp

Good evening. My name is Gerard Bambrick. I am the Village Administrator for the Village of Floral Park.

Floral Park has its own unique character. Although Floral Park is within thirty minutes from Manhattan, Floral Park has managed to keep a small town feel.

I mention this not to imply that Floral Park is opposed to any and all development at Belmont Park. To the contrary, for at least a decade Floral Park has clearly and publicly advocated for a Master Plan for the development of Belmont Park that preserves and enhances Belmont Park's reputation as the premier horse racing destination in the United

States, while also preserving and enhancing the character and quality of life of the communities that surround Belmont Park.

However, because of the massive size and scope of the proposed development as set forth in the DEIS, it is clear that the character of the communities surrounding Belmont, including Floral Park, will not be preserved or enhanced by this project as proposed by the DEIS.

The DEIS acknowledges that there are unavoidable adverse impacts from this project and specifically acknowledges the adverse impacts that will result from increased traffic.

The DEIS attempts to justify proceeding with this project by asserting that the purported benefits of this project outweigh the unavoidable adverse impacts.

However, this attempt to project a favorable outcome for this balancing of the purported benefits against the very real detriments of this project falls apart under the slightest scrutiny of the DEIS for two very simple reasons: First, the DEIS's description of the unavoidable adverse impacts is grossly under-weighted. Many others, including the Village's traffic expert (NV5), will demonstrate that the DEIS does not

begin to reveal the truly devastating impact that the traffic generated by this proposed project will have on the suburban character of the communities surrounding Belmont, including Floral Park.

The second reason the DEIS balancing of benefits and detriments falls apart is because the purported benefits of the project are greatly overstated.

Just one example of the overstated benefits is contained in Chapter 2 of the DEIS – Land Use, Zoning and Community Character, which attempts to portray this proposed project as furthering the goals of the 1998 Nassau County Master Plan. However, the development principles and goals set forth in the 1998 Nassau County Master Plan do not lend support to this project.

Several years ago, I had the privilege of serving as the Vice Chairman of the Nassau County Planning Commission, and, in 1998, I was a Planning Commission member when the Nassau County Master Plan was adopted by the Planning Commission.

The DEIS (at p 2-13) tries to bootstrap support for this project from the fact that the 1998 Nassau County Master Plan listed Belmont as an “underutilized property” that could potentially be redeveloped.

However, the redevelopment that the Nassau County Master Plan identified as a potential at Belmont was redevelopment as new housing and mixed uses (Nassau County Master Plan at II-10). Mixed use residential redevelopment is entirely consistent with the existing Town of Hempstead Zoning for this property, which provides for a business development for a 100 foot depth along Hempstead Turnpike and then 6000 square foot residential parcels beyond that. That intensity of development under the Town of Hempstead Zoning provisions is nowhere near the excessive over intensive development proposed by this project.

However, and perhaps much more significantly, nowhere in the Nassau County Master Plan is it suggested that Belmont, or any other underutilized property, should be redeveloped as a shopping mall. A stated overarching goal of the 1998 Master Plan was to foster, protect and revitalize the small local downtowns, referred to as “centers” in the

1998 Master Plan. Both Floral Park and Elmont are identified in the 1998 Nassau County Master Plan as having centers that the Master Plan sought to foster and protect (Nassau County Master Plan Map). The Nassau County Master Plan states “the concept of centers is an integral component of this Comprehensive Plan since it focuses attention on restoring vitality and maintaining the diversity of uses in downtowns” (NC MP II-3). In fact, the 1998 Nassau County Master Plan specifically identifies shopping malls as impacting downtowns and centers throughout the County (NC MP VI-13). In cautioning against shopping malls and their negative impact on local downtowns, the 1998 Master Plan warns: “Today, the limitations of automobile dependent land use patterns are all too clear” and points to the traffic congestion caused by such use (NC MP IV-1).

Consequently, the ESD cannot plausibly claim that the 1998 Nassau County Master Plan supports this proposal to place an automobile dependent shopping mall at Belmont.

In fact, the Nassau County Master Plan refutes the unsupported assertion in the DEIS that somehow this project will benefit local

downtowns. The Nassau County Master Plan acknowledges what history has shown: automobile dependent malls as proposed here, are a threat to the small downtowns and centers like the downtowns in Floral Park and Elmont.

This project needs to be significantly scaled back in order to protect the suburban character of the communities that surround Belmont, including Floral Park.