

Belmont Park Redevelopment Project
Draft Scope
Community Statement
Bellerose Commonwealth Civic Association, Bellerose, Queens
April 3, 2018

Bellerose Commonwealth Civic Association is a non-profit civic organization representing over 1,200 residences in Bellerose Queens, incorporated in 1935. Located just north of Jericho Turnpike and bordering on the Cross Island Parkway, the Association is impacted by operations of Belmont Park, particularly when a major event occurs, such as the Belmont Stakes. Representatives of the Association attended the scoping meeting on March 22, 2018, the listening session last July and several meetings of Belmont Park Community Coalition. Upon review of the Draft Scope document and observation of the comments at the scoping meeting, Bellerose Commonwealth Civic Association stands with the Coalition members and the vast majority of community residents who presented at the scoping meeting, in strong opposition to the project as presented in the draft scope. The Association believes that the proposed redevelopment project far exceeds the needs and capacities of the area and that implementation of the project as proposed in the scope document would overwhelm the resources of the area. Most importantly, with full implementation, traffic congestion generated by the project would severely impact local economic development and reduce the quality of life of surrounding communities, including Bellerose.

Most critical to residents of Bellerose and nearby Queens communities, is traffic congestion. Anyone using the Cross Island Parkway especially during the evening rush hour knows that the road is significantly beyond its capacity and there is no room or budget to expand the roadway. Thousands of additional cars destined to the proposed arena would bring the parkway to a standstill during any of the hockey or other major events. We believe that traffic on Jericho Turnpike has not been considered sufficiently. In light of Cross Island Parkway congestion, we believe that new real-time traffic technologies, such as Waze and Google, will divert traffic through other routes and impact intersections along the length of Jericho Turnpike from New Hyde Park to the Cross Island Parkway. Jericho Turnpike intersections such as those at Commonwealth Boulevard, Little Neck Parkway in Bellerose, Covert Avenue, New Hyde Park Road will see additional traffic. These intersections must be studied in addition to Plainfield Avenue. Such diversions are now being challenged in other communities when the Waze app diverts cars into local communities and streets not designed for such traffic, causing safety, congestion and emissions problems.

In addition to the over 220 hockey and non-hockey events listed in the scoping document, we believe additional planning and study must be given to the rumored and reported plans to increase the use of Belmont Racetrack by installing lighting for night use and the proposed transfer of racing from Aqueduct to Belmont in the foreseeable future. These actions will compound the additional traffic of the Belmont Park Redevelopment Project and will grossly impact all communities in the area in ways that will have serious environmental impact year-round.

Regarding the impacts on the Nassau communities, Bellerose Commonwealth Civic Association fully agrees with many of the comments that were expressed repeatedly by residents of Elmont, Franklin Square, South Floral Park, and other communities at the scoping meeting. The most egregious aspects of the project are: the inclusion of a 250 room, approximately 24 story hotel; the development of a retail

village, i.e. shopping center; and, the construction of an electrical substation on the north lot. We also agree with the serious concerns of the Belmont Park Community Coalition, homeowners and elected officials regarding existing traffic conditions on Hempstead Turnpike, Plainfield Avenue and as mentioned above, Cross Island Parkway. These already busy roadways would be exacerbated by additional traffic generated by hockey at the arena, as well as the anticipated 170 additional events, large and small, anticipated to attract an additional 3,500+ cars, not to mention buses, taxis and kiss 'n ride drop offs. The area welcomes the Belmont Stakes, despite its logistical challenges, because it is a one-day, nation-wide sports spectacular event, it brings special prominence to the area and it creates economic opportunities for local shops and restaurants, even some in Bellerose. It is unimaginable to consider similar traffic nightmare operations occurring for an additional 55 hockey games and 30 concert events that would exceed the hockey capacity.

We cannot understand the inclusion of proposed "retail village" while shopping centers locally and nationally are struggling because of reduced demand and competition from online services such as Amazon. Inclusion of restaurants and boutique shops in the project eliminates the potential benefit of economic opportunity for existing and new shops and restaurants in the Elmont area, and Bellerose. If the project is unsustainable without these amenities, it should not be considered. If the stand-alone arena is sustainable, then it should provide innovative assistance to develop and support the surrounding area. One way to build up the nearby area may be to establish parking toward the east end and provide free local "trolley" transfers to popular local restaurants, shops and attractions.

The proposed hotel is extremely oversized for the area. In Queens we have seen one hotel development after another proposed and built without adequate demand and there is currently a serious oversupply of underutilized hotel rooms within a few miles of Belmont Park. These underutilized facilities, even in Nassau County, too often become attractive to uses adverse to the community. Although it was highlighted at the scoping meeting that the plans for the height and room count were not final, the hotel building must not exceed the grandstand in height, be spread out horizontally and be limited to a reasonable amount of rooms and shops to accommodate only its patrons. A reasonably sized hotel may have the benefit of increasing the use of nearby available rooms in Nassau and Queens.

Finally, we concur with the local communities, teachers and parents, to the positioning of the power substation near the Bellerose-Floral Park School. This also was a preliminary plan, but must be reconsidered. In addition, the prospect of major event parking in the north lot with the possibility of tailgating parties near the school should include restrictions if the plan moves forward and traffic exiting onto Plainfield Avenue will create unacceptable congestion and community impacts in this quiet neighborhood.

Overall, the Bellerose Commonwealth Civic Association stands with the local community in its strong and well documented objections to this major project as proposed.

Richard C. Hellenbrecht, Secretary/Treasurer
For the Board and Members of
Bellerose Commonwealth Civic Association