

## Community sees fruits of its efforts in Glen Oaks

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When public and education officials held a ribbon-cutting May 21 for the Glen Oaks Campus, home to the Queens High School of Teaching, PS/IS 208 and PS/MS 266, some folks received no recognition for their key role.

Absent the Queens Civic Congress and a galvanized local community, the dedication would have involved a retail/office park or luxury housing. The community's success in mobilizing the public and elected officials to save the site to serve the community rather than serve it up to a developer for a big payday represents a model for other groups.



Corey Bearak

The same day of the ribbon-cutting, May 21, proved a rather strange one for me.

Two weeks before, on behalf of the Queens Civic Congress, Sean Walsh and I committed that the umbrella for 100 borough civic groups would attend a May 21 summit on the private bus takeover and regional bus issues. This meant that neither Jim Trent, QCC's treasurer and lead person on transportation matters, nor I could attend both the ribbon-cutting and the summit.

Jim attended the campus event and I the bus takeover summit held at NYU at Washington Square. My attendance allowed me to visit 171 and 173 Thompson St. the morning after I missed a live DVD recording in Nashville by POCO, my favorite band, joined by its founder, Richie Furay.

Richie and Jim Messina founded POCO after the 1968 demise of revered 2000 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee Buffalo Springfield, founded by Richie with Stephen Stills and Neil Young, who all stayed in rooms at those addresses on Thompson St. (See "For What It's Worth, the story of Buffalo Springfield," by John Einarson and Richie Furay.)

When I returned to Queens later on May 21, I learned about plans to consolidate the federal facilities at St. Albans Veterans Hospital. That location seems ripe for a civic-inspired plan to establish appropriate reuses for any space the federal government determines it no longer needs.

The civic congress established a Special Committee on Creedmoor in 1997, shortly after members of the former Eastern Queens Civic Council and United Civic Council of Queens founded the borough coalition to replace the Federation of Civic Councils of the Borough of Queens. I was the committee's first chair; Jim became chair one year ago this month.

Barney Aquilino of the Rocky Hill Civic Association, which abuts the southwestern portion of the Creedmoor Campus, becomes chair later this month. Every civic proximate to the Creedmoor campus contributed to the committee that was formed after word leaked out that the Pataki administration had plans to sell off most of the campus to developers. Something similar occurred with Pilgrim State (on Long Island) and Bronx State psychiatric centers.

The community views Creedmoor as part of a continuum of green space running from Fort Totten to Alley Pond Park and south along the Cross Island Parkway corridor. Many had also used facilities on the campus including its theater, gymnasium, bowling alley and pool.

But rather than just asking our elected officials to help preserve the Creedmoor campus as an asset that could be reused to benefit the community, the civics actually developed and presented their own master plan for the entire campus. The “Civic Master Plan,” as it came to be known, stressed the need to ensure that new uses for Creedmoor maintain green space and use existing building footprints. (See [www.queensciviccongress.org/statements/files/1997/Creedmoor%20Master%20Plan%207-13-97.wpd](http://www.queensciviccongress.org/statements/files/1997/Creedmoor%20Master%20Plan%207-13-97.wpd).)

After the plan’s presentation at a meeting chaired by then Borough President Claire Shulman, the governor’s economic development folks, who were coordinating the sell-off of the public land, slowed down. To her great credit, Shulman organized a Creedmoor Task Force and after viewed much of the property.

After we presented a revised “Creedmoor in Phases Plan” that advocated the school campus, the borough president, who made building new schools a priority, embraced the civics’ proposal for the school campus. (See [www.queensciviccongress.org/statements/files/1998/Creedmoor%20in%20Phases%20-%20Implementing%20the%20Civic%20Plan%206-15-98.wpd](http://www.queensciviccongress.org/statements/files/1998/Creedmoor%20in%20Phases%20-%20Implementing%20the%20Civic%20Plan%206-15-98.wpd).)

Building 51, with a full gym, pool, auditorium, bowling alley and library, looked like it just needed the addition of classroom space to become a full-fledged high school.

Claire got the Board of Education involved. The civic did not go away. When the School Facilities folks came back with a wacko design for three schools, including a high school that would share a gym, cafeteria and auditorium, the civics screamed and questioned the inadequate plans.

Unfortunately, asbestos issues contributed to the demolition of Building 51. But all through the school year that ends in a few weeks, the community enjoyed a new high school and two new K-8 schools on a beautiful campus. The community came forward with its own progressive vision and not only did the community gain, but students and the city obtained needed additional school seats.

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