

7/25/16 Update: REVITALIZATION OF THE CORAM PLAZA SHOPPING CENTER

In an effort to both clarify the understanding of this effort and to align expectations, be aware that the first meeting of the CORAM PLAZA REVITALIZATION TASK FORCE consisted of the following organizations:

- CO-CHAIRS: Suffolk County Legislature: Leg. Sarah Anker (D6) and Leg. Rob Calarco (D7)
- NYS Governor's Office
- NYS Department of Transportation
- Town of Brookhaven: Councilman Mike Loguercio
- Suffolk County Police Department – 6th Precinct
- Coram Civic Association
- Middle Island Civic Association
- Home Depot
- RPAI (Retail Properties of America)-rental agents for Coram Plaza
- Hope House Ministries
- New Beginnings Church
- Suffolk County Department of Social Services
- Long Island Coalition for the Homeless
- S:US (Services for the Underserved)

Other organizations and individuals shall be added to this mix as the needs dictate.

At the urging of the Coram Civic Association as well as the Middle Country Road Task Force, Legislator Sarah Anker brought all of these organizations together for this meeting for the express purpose of revitalizing the Coram Plaza Shopping Center.

Revitalization simply means “renewal, revival, recovery.” We would like to see it regain the prominence that it had when it first opened around 1970 with Grant City and Pathmark as anchor stores and Path Liquors, Royal Card Shop, and Martha's Deli as major-draw small business tenants. I worked in the center then and it was a thriving, clean, safe and exciting place for our community to shop...and it will be again.

Social and economic conditions have changed since those times and so have the challenges for maintaining a robust shopping center. Hopefully, after reviewing the organizations assembled in this effort, you will see that our task force is attempting to address solutions to the many diverse challenges the shopping center faces.

What are our goals? Our goals are the desires of the community for a robust shopping center that is safe and clean both inside and out; night and day. The community desires a shopping center with a varied mix of shops that draw folks from all over the Longwood and neighboring communities.

Initial efforts to achieve these goals:

- Panhandling – this is the single, most vocalized complaint received from our community residents. These panhandlers create an environment of fear among many potential shoppers; driving away business thus threatening the viability of the shopping center. The largest percentage of these panhandlers are not homeless nor are they outside of the social welfare safety net. They actually roam from shopping center to shopping center. Increased security and the use of Affidavits of Trespass by landlords and store owners/managers are being utilized to drive the panhandlers away. The single most effective weapon however is for shoppers to not

give the panhandlers anything no matter their tales of woe (which are primarily sales scripts that they have honed to perfection). You are *not* battling poverty or homelessness or helping a supposed veteran when you give panhandlers money. You are simply enabling their “problems.”

- Homeless – We have enlisted the aid of numerous organizations (see above) in an effort to provide the true homeless folks in the Coram Plaza with the assistance that they need. “Jobs” is not the answer since most of these folks living in the woods are totally unemployable. Many are addicted to alcohol and drugs and/or suffer from a level of mental incompetency. Most also refuse the assistance being offered to them. They live in the woods rather than going to a shelter and that is by their own choice. Homelessness does not have a simple solution and that is why we have enlisted the aid of the professionals. We have asked the NYS DOT to “limb up” the trees on the parcels of land behind the two gas stations off of Grant Smith Road in an effort to make those areas less inviting for the homeless to set up ‘camps’ and hopefully motivate them to go to shelters. “Limb up” simply means removing the ground brush and cutting the low branches off of the trees to provide a clearer view through the area.
- Lighthouse Mission weekly distributions - While the intent of the weekly food and sundries distribution is a commendable charitable effort, it has some serious unintended consequences beyond jeopardizing retail traffic for that day such as promoting weeklong vagrancy in the center. Lighthouse Mission has agreed to move the weekly distribution up the road to the old 6th precinct building which has adequate parking for the vast volume of folks who arrive by car for the handouts.
- Overall cleanliness and lighting. The anchor tenants and the three property owners for the center have all been made aware of these complaints. There has been restriping and lighting improvement in the “Stop N Shop” end and lighting improvement in the Home Depot segment. Our SCPD 6th Precinct have made additional lighting recommendations to the major tenants and landlords.
- Suffolk County Transit Bus Stop - This could be a major plus for any shopping center; however, it has gone to seed in the Coram Plaza simply because it has been allowed to become a community center for vagrants. The huge amount of open space around it as well as the numerous park benches provided invite the problem. It has also become a major drug trafficking location which the SCPD are currently actively cracking down on. Moving the bus stop is presently not feasible since it is a transfer point for numerous SC Transit Bus lines. We are working with the county and the SCPD in additional solutions to this challenge.
- At the July 25th Joint Community Meeting with the SCPD 6th Precinct and the Coram Civic Association, Inspector Murphy, Officer Bradshaw and the other SCPD officers present all pledged the “relentless” efforts of the SCPD in addressing these numerous and varied challenges and restoring the Coram Plaza to its safe and vibrant former self.

Yes folks, it will take time. Nothing happens overnight and nothing happens in a vacuum. Help us to help you by frequenting the Coram Plaza for your shopping and by communicating real problems witnessed to the tenants, the SCPD, your local civics, and the office of Legislator Sarah Anker ...*Chris Reilly*